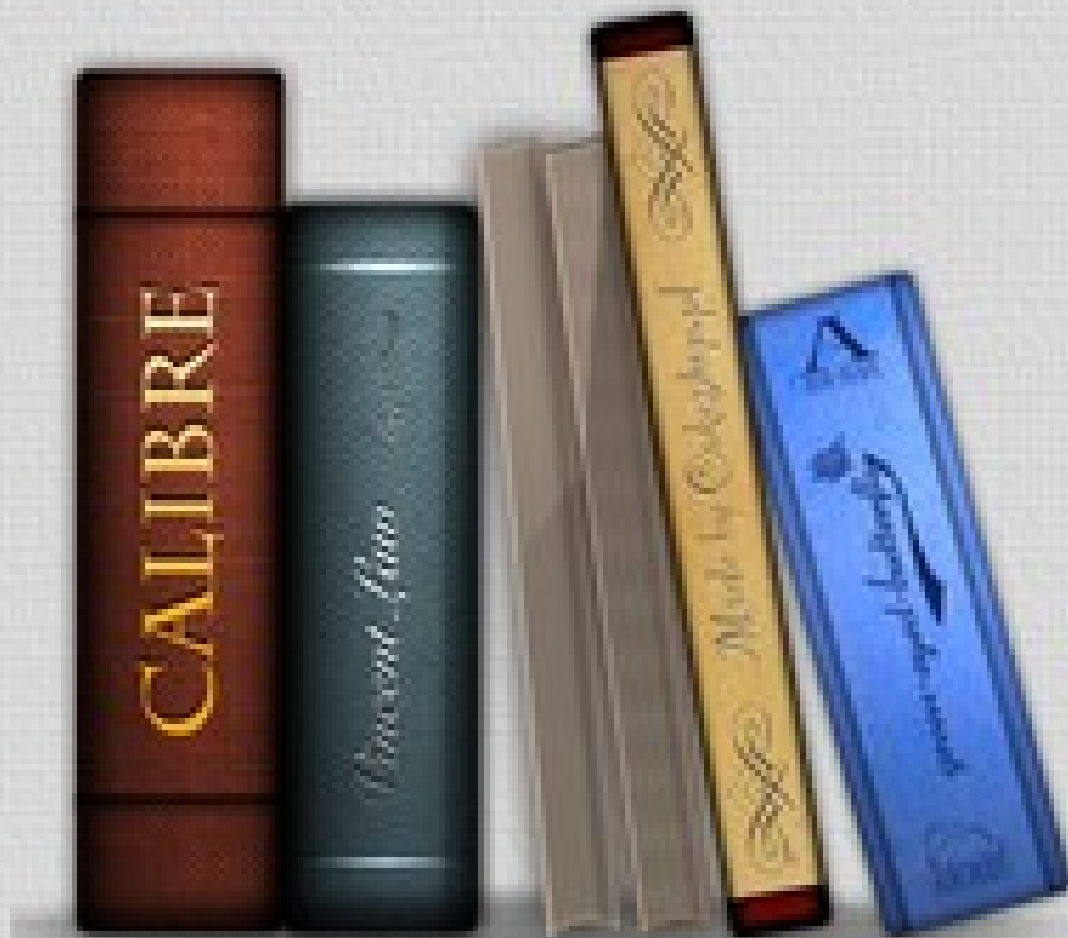


# DGuzik 09 1Samuel

David Guzik

## Book 9 of Bible Commentary: David Guzik



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# 1

There was a man from Ramathaim Zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. He was the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 1:1-28

## **1 Samuel 1 - The Birth of Samuel**

1 and 2 Samuel form one book in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. They were not divided into two books until the Old Testament was translated into Greek. We don't know who wrote the books; certainly, Samuel was a major contributor, but much of the book takes place after his death in 1 Samuel 25. They are called the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, not because he wrote all of them, but because they describe his great ministry in Israel and the legacy of it.

*"Samuel the Prophet" thus practically bridges the gulf between Samson the Judge and David the King: and there is deep significance in the fact that his name is identified with the two Books of Scripture which describe this great transitional period, every event of which was affected by his influence.* (F.B. Meyer) A. Hannah's barrenness and her vow.

1. (1-2) The family of Elkanah.

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

a. **Now there was a certain man:** The book begins with a certain man, living at a certain time in Israel. This was a critical time in Israel's history, because of the rising power of the Philistines, who were becoming stronger and

stronger because of their more modern Greek military technology. Israel could compete on more equal terms with Moab and Ammon, but Greek military equipment (helmets, shields, coats of mail, swords and spears) made the Philistines much more formidable opponents.

i. The Philistines were an immigrant people from the military aristocracy of the island of Crete (Amo. 9:7). Small numbers of

Philistines were in the land at the time of Abraham; but they only came in force soon after Israel came to Canaan from Egypt.

They were organized into five city-states.

Archaeologists tell us two other things about the Philistines: they were hard drinkers, and they were the first in the region to effectively use iron, and they made the most of it.

ii. "Never did time seem more hopeless than when Samuel arose. The Philistines, strengthened not merely by a constant influx of immigrants, but by the importation of arms from Greece, were fast reducing Israel to the condition of a subject race." (Smith, *Pulpit Commentary*)

b. **A certain man**: At this strategic time and place, God begins His plan as He almost always does - with a person, a man or a woman He will use. God could accomplish His work all by Himself, or by using angels, or by any number of other means, but His normal way of working is to find **a certain man** and work through them.

c. Elkanah was a descendant of Zuph, and his family line shows he was a Levite (1Ch. 6:16-30). He is called an **Ephraimite** here because his family lived in a Levitical city in boundaries of Ephraim, not because he was of the tribe of Ephraim.

d. **Elkanah . . . had two wives:** The **certain man** mentioned in verse one, whose name was Elkanah, had two wives. Polygamy was a fact of life in that whole part of the ancient world.

However, the Bible never puts polygamy in a favorable light; strife and conflict always characterize polygamous families in the Bible.

i. In this account, we will see an intense, competitive relationship between the two wives, **Peninnah** (who had children) and **Hannah**, who did not.

ii. "The custom of those times permitted polygamy; but wherever there was more

than *one wife*, we find the peace of the family greatly disturbed by it." (Clarke) iii. "Polygamy was ever a sin,

though in the patriarchs and ancient saints, a sin of ignorance. 'It was not so from the

beginning.' (Matt. xix. 8; Mal. ii. 15) . . . And although before the law given by Moses,

polygamy is not reprehended." (Trapp)

2. (3-7) Elkanah and his family journey to the tabernacle.

This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there. And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her

womb. And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had

closed her womb. So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

a. **This man went up from his city:**

According to the law of Moses, Israelites were not to worship God through sacrifice any time and any way they pleased. They were to bring their sacrifices to the tabernacle of God, and the priests of God, which at this time, were at

**Shiloh.**

i. Shiloh was the central city of Israel, the religious center, for almost four hundred

years. The tabernacle - the majestic tent

God command Moses to build when they came out of Egypt, was erected there, and

in it sat the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark

was the symbolic throne of God among

Israel, the sacred chest containing the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. At the

Ark, once a year, the high priest would make

atonement for the sins of the nation. Though

it was hidden, it was a powerful and

important part of Israel's religious life.

ii. Today, if you visit Shiloh, you can see the bare, ancient outline of ruined walls of

stone, walls that had once surrounded

Israel's tabernacle for almost 400 years. On

the heights you can see desolate, fruitless

hills all around; rocky and bare, except for a distant Israeli neighborhood.

iii. Shiloh enjoyed all this glory for hundreds of years, but it came to an end abruptly.

Hundreds of years later, through the prophet

Jeremiah, God used Shiloh as a lesson. "Go to Shiloh," He

says. "Look what happened to a place of spiritual privilege and glory when they forgot about Me. The same will happen

to you if you do not turn again to Me" (a paraphrase of Jer. 7:12-14).

**b. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and**

**Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were**

**there:** These priests are mentioned by name because they were known among Israel as notoriously wicked priests (as will be shown in 1Sa. 2:17, 24). Their mention here is to show how godly Elkanah was - even though the priests were wicked, he still offered sacrifices to the LORD, knowing that the wickedness of the priest did not make his own service to the LORD invalid.

i. "This good man did not run into that vulgar error, of neglecting his duty of offering to God for the wickedness of the priests." (Poole)

c. **He would give portions:** Every year, when Elkanah brought his family to the tabernacle for sacrifice, he would eat a ceremonial meal at the tabernacle with his family, giving portions to his wives and their children. He showed his favor and love to Hannah by giving her a **double portion**.

i. No one who offered a sin offering ate any portion of it; but of the peace offerings or offerings of thanksgiving, the offerer received a substantial portion.

ii. "The sacrifices which were made were probably *peace-offerings*, of which the *blood* was poured out at the foot of the altar; the *fat* was burnt on the fire; the *breast* and *right shoulder* were the portion of the priest; and the *rest* belonged to him who made the offering; on it he and his family feasted, each receiving his *portion*." (Clarke) d. Yet, because of the conflict between the two wives, Hannah could not enjoy this display of love and favor from Elkanah: **therefore she wept and did not eat.**

i. It is possible for problems at home to make your time at the house of God miserable. There is Hannah, at the house of the LORD, with a full, blessed, double portion in front of her, and she can't enjoy it at all!

e. Despite the pain of Hannah, God had a purpose in it all: **the LORD had closed her womb**. God would use the closed womb of Hannah, and the pain from being childless, to accomplish something great in her life and in the whole plan of salvation. Even though things were hard, God was still in charge.

i. God's sovereignty over the womb is a familiar theme in the Bible (Gen. 20:18; 29:31; 30:22). Though many couples today experience the same pain of childlessness, God has a plan and a purpose for something good - though not easy - in it all.

ii. "It was a great reproach to a woman among the Jews to be barren; because, say some, everyone hoped that the *Messiah* should spring forth from her line." (Clarke) iii. "Barrenness in ancient times was the ultimate tragedy for a married woman, since her husband's hopes and dreams depended on her providing him with a son to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate." (Youngblood)

iv. Why should Peninnah (who seems of a bad character) be blessed with children, and Hannah (who seems of a good character) be cursed with barrenness? Often, we don't understand God's ways, until He has finished accomplishing His purpose. Hannah (her name means *grace*) has a barren womb, but a fruitful spirit. God is going to use this woman!

3. (8-11) Hannah's godly vow.

Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than ten sons?" So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. And she *was* in

bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

a. **Hannah, why do you weep? . . . Am I not better to you than ten sons?** In Elkanah's response to Hannah's sorrow, we see that he really does love her; yet, as many men, he is at least somewhat insensitive to her. He does not recognize that she had needs that he could not fulfill (such as the desire to be a mother).

b. Hannah **was in bitterness of soul** and great **anguish**; yet she did the right thing.

Hannah took those bitter and anguished feelings to God honestly in prayer.

i. Most people know a time of **bitterness of soul** and **anguish** at some time in their lives. Thomas Sutherland said that he lost his faith during his time as a hostage in

Lebanon. "God, I prayed so many times and prayed so hard - so hard! - and nothing

happened. After thinking about it deeply, I'm not so sure there is a God." He added, "But I never felt abandoned by my country." The headline to this story read: *Sutherland Tells of Captivity Without Bitterness*. But what about his bitterness towards God?

ii. Hannah had many problems. Her husband's heart was divided. Her home, instead of being a place of refuge from trials, was a place of trials. Her hope had been disappointed. She was misunderstood by her husband. Yet in all those things, Hannah did the right things: she wept, she prayed, and she committed the whole situation to the LORD.



c. **O LORD of hosts:** Hannah begins her prayer by calling on the **LORD of hosts**. The title **LORD of hosts** is used some 260 times in the Old Testament, and has the idea "LORD of the Mighty Armies." Hannah feels attacked by her rival, and so calls on the *LORD of Mighty Armies* to be her protector!

d. **She made a vow:** Hannah promises her son to the work of the LORD, vowing that he will be a Nazirite from birth (**I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head**). According to Numbers 6, the vow of a Nazirite included the following: i. Abstinence from any product from a grape vine, signifying distance from all fleshly pleasures.

ii. Taking no part in any mourning for the dead, nor to come near a dead body, because the dead show the corruption and the fruit of sin. Also, because the Nazirite had greater concerns than the ordinary joys and sorrows of life.

iii. Never cutting the hair, because it was a public, visible sign to others of the vow.

iv. Typically, the vow of a Nazirite was taken for a set and rather short period of time.

Samuel and Samson (Jdg. 13:5) were unique, because they were Nazirites from birth.

e. **I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life:** The child born would be a Levite, and being of that tribe, would be already dedicated unto the LORD, because God regarded the tribe of Levi as His own special possession. But the time of a Levite's special dedication to the LORD only lasted from the age of 30 to 50 (Num. 4:2-3). Here, Hannah was taking something that already belonged to the LORD in some sense, and gave it again to the

LORD in a greater way - for the whole life, and in a the dedication of a Nazirite, which was a greater consecration than a Levite.

i. Even so, we may be dedicated unto the LORD - but is there a greater dedication God wants from us? It would have been easy for Hannah to say, "I don't need to dedicate my child to the LORD, because he is already dedicated." But there was a deeper dedication the LORD was trying to draw out of Hannah. Is there a deeper dedication the LORD is trying to draw out of you?

f. It is difficult, even impossible to understand all the reasons and dynamics behind the plan of God; but certainly, if God wanted this little boy to be dedicated to Him in this special way, He had to allow Hannah to come to this place of desperation.

i. Certainly, this was not the first time Hannah had prayed for a child. But perhaps this was the first time she prayed, truly giving the child to the LORD - not just in her heart, but in this vow as well.

ii. "Prayers and tears are the saints' best weapons." (Trapp)  
But Hannah - just as many of us - would not resort to these best weapons until bitterness and anguish forced her.

4. (12-14) Eli, the high priest, watches Hannah's silent prayer.

And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

a. **As she continued praying** is literally, "as she multiplied to pray." We have recorded only a bare summary of Hannah's prayer. As is the case with most all of the prayers and speeches of the Bible, all we have recorded is a portion or a summary of what was said.

b. **Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not**

**heard:** It is often good to pray aloud, because it can help us to better focus our thoughts. Yet this passage shows that prevailing prayer doesn't need to be vocal, it can be silent in the heart.

c. **How long will you be drunk?** Of course, Eli misunderstands Hannah here. But the fact that he would even suspect that she was drunk shows that it may not have been all that

unusual for people to be drunk at the

"fellowship meals" they would have in sacrificing to the LORD at the tabernacle. The fact that Eli suspected Hannah of drunkenness doesn't speak well for what he had seen around the

tabernacle area previously!

i. "The fact that Eli supposed her to be *drunken*, and the other of the conduct of Eli's sons already mentioned, prove that religion was at this time at a very low ebb in Shiloh; for it seems *drunken women* did come to the place, and *lewd women* were to be found there." (Clarke) d. Hannah suffers from being misunderstood by both her husband and her high priest; our High Priest never misunderstands us (Heb. 4:14-16).

5. (15-18) Hannah responds to Eli's accusation; Eli answers back with a blessing.

And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I *am* a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. "Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until

now." Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.

a. **No, my lord:** Hannah will not accept Eli's accusation, but she will not respond in a haughty or an arrogant tone. She will explain herself, but will do it remembering that he is her high priest.

b. **I have poured out my soul before the LORD:** This is exactly what Hannah needed to do. Instead of keeping the *bitterness of soul* and the *anguish* in her heart, she **poured it out** of her **soul before the LORD**. Don't hold it in, pour it out before the LORD! The bitterness and anguish is like an acid that will eat up your insides, unless you pour it out before the LORD.

c. **The God of Israel grant your petition:** Eli may have spoken this only as a pious wish; but it was in fact a word from the LORD.

i. Caiaphas is an example of a high priest who was not godly, yet spoke a word from the LORD (Joh. 11:49-52).

d. **Her face was no longer sad:** The change in Hannah's countenance shows that she received the promise with faith, something

necessary if we will inherit the promises of God (Heb. 6:12).

i. Hannah shows how we can regain the joy of fellowship in the house of the LORD again: by pouring out our heart before the LORD and by, receiving His word with *faith*.

B. The birth and dedication of Samuel.

1. (19-20) Samuel's miraculous conception is evidence of God's special call on his life.

Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned and

came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD."

**a. Then they arose early in the morning**

**and worshipped:** Hannah could genuinely *worship* the LORD in faith, while the promise was still not yet fulfilled. What a glorious pattern of faith!

**b. And the LORD remembered her:** To use the term **remembered** is an *anthropomorphism*, a way of explaining God's actions in human terms that *we* can understand, even if it doesn't perfectly describe God's action.

It isn't as if God ever *forgot* Hannah.

**c. It came to pass in the process of time:** It didn't happen right away. Hannah had reason enough to be discouraged, but when the promise of God came, she did not lose faith in the promise, even when it took some time. She is a great example of *those who through faith and patience inherit the promises* (Heb. 6:12).

i. "So the meaning is, That although her husband knew her conjugally at his return, and God was mindful of her, and intended in his time to give her his blessing, yet she did not conceive at first, but after some days or time afterwards." (Poole) 2. (21-23) Hannah keeps the child until he is weaned.

Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, " *Not* until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever." And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His word." So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

a. **Until the child is weaned:** In that culture, a child was not weaned until two years old, or sometimes three. It is reasonable to assume that Hannah was in no hurry to wean Samuel!

b. **Only let the LORD establish His word:** This is wonderful counsel from Elkanah. He is saying, "do everything in obedience to God so we may see His word established among us."

3. (24-28) Hannah dedicates Samuel to God's service.

Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child *was* young.

Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, "O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I *am* the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshiped the LORD there.

a. **She took him up with her:** How difficult this must have been! Not only hard for Hannah, but hard for Elkanah also. Their willingness to fulfill the vow, even at great personal cost, is evidence of godliness in both Elkanah and Hannah.

b. The fact that 1Sa. 1:24 mentions three bulls brought to Shiloh, but 1Sa. 1:25 mentions only one being sacrificed (with some of the meat available for a fellowship meal) emphasizes that one of the bulls was specifically made as a burnt offering for the cleansing and consecration of little Samuel.

i. The magnitude of Elkanah's offering when Samuel was dedicated to the LORD - offering an entire bull - shows that a "grown up" offering for sin was made at his dedication, even though Samuel was only

about three years old. This is a subtle reference to the *inherited* nature of our sinfulness. Though Samuel has not sinned as much as an adult, he is still a guilty sinner, because he has inherited a sinful nature from Adam - as we all have.

c. Literally, **I also have lent him to the LORD**

could be translated, "And I also made myself to ask him for the LORD." The idea is not that Hannah "owns" the child and is "lending" him to the LORD. Instead, the idea is that the child is her "prayer," or the fulfillment of her prayer to the LORD.

i. The name *Samuel* means "Name of God" but Hannah - as was common among the Hebrews - made a pun on the name by saying that she had "asked the LORD for him." *Asked* in Hebrew sounds like *Samuel*.

d. **So they worshipped the LORD there:**

*Worship* is a repeated characteristic of this family (1Sa. 1:3, 19, 28). Even in difficult situations, they can worship the LORD. Praising God on the day you give your little son away may not be easy, but it is praise God is pleased with, even as we are to bring a *sacrifice of praise* to God (Heb. 13:15).

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He had two wives; the name of the first was Hannah and the name of the second was Peninnah. Now Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless.

**3** Year after year this man would go up from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh. It was there that the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, served as the LORD's priests. **4** Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he used to give meat portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. **5** But he would give a double portion to Hannah, because he especially loved her. Now the LORD had not enabled her to have children. **6** Her rival wife used to upset her and make her worry, for the LORD had not enabled her to have

children. **7** Peninnah would behave this way year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the LORD's house, Peninnah would upset her so that she would weep and refuse to eat. **8** Finally her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and not eat? Why are you so sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

**9** On one occasion in Shiloh, after they had finished eating and drinking, Hannah got up. (Now at the time Eli the priest was sitting in his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple.) **10** She was very upset as she prayed to the LORD, and she was weeping uncontrollably. **11** She made a vow saying, "O LORD of hosts, if you will look with compassion on the suffering of your female servant, remembering me and not forgetting your servant, and give a male child to your servant, then I will dedicate him to the LORD all the days of his life. His hair will never be cut."

**12** As she continued praying to the LORD, Eli was watching her mouth. **13** Now Hannah was speaking from her heart. Although her lips were moving, her voice was inaudible. Eli therefore thought she was drunk. **14** So he said to her, "How often do you intend to get drunk? Put away your wine!"

**15** But Hannah replied, "That's not the way it is, my lord! I am under a great deal of stress. I have drunk neither wine nor beer. Rather, I have poured out my soul to the LORD. **16** Don't consider your servant a wicked woman, for until now I have spoken from my deep pain and anguish."

**17** Eli replied, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request that you have asked of him." **18** She said, "May I, your servant, find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and got something to eat. Her face no longer looked sad.

**19** They got up early the next morning and after worshiping the LORD, they returned to their home at Ramah. Elkanah had marital relations with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. **20** After some time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son.



She named him Samuel, thinking, "I asked the LORD for him.

**21** This man Elkanah went up with all his family to make the yearly sacrifice to the LORD and to keep his vow, **22**

but Hannah did not go up with them. Instead she told her husband, "Once the boy is weaned, I will bring him and appear before the LORD, and he will remain there from then on."

**23** So her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what you think best. Stay until you have weaned him. May the LORD fulfill his promise."

So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. **24** Once she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with three bulls, an ephah of flour, and a container of wine. She brought him to the LORD's house at Shiloh, even though he was young. **25** Once the bull had been slaughtered, they brought the boy to Eli. **26** She said, "Just as surely as you are alive, my lord, I am the woman who previously stood here with you in order to pray to the LORD.

**27** I prayed for this boy, and the LORD has given me the request that I asked of him. **28** Now I dedicate him to the LORD. From this time on he is dedicated to the LORD." Then they worshiped the LORD there.

**1** Hannah prayed,

"My heart rejoices in the LORD;

my horn is exalted high because of the LORD.

I loudly denounce my enemies,

for I am happy that you delivered me.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 2:1-36

### ***1 Samuel 2 - Hannah's Prayer, Eli's Evil Sons***

A. Hannah's prayer.

1. (1-2) Thanksgiving and praise.

And Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the LORD;

My horn is exalted in the LORD.

I smile at my enemies,

Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

No one is holy like the LORD,

For *there is* none besides You,

Nor *is there* any rock like our God."

a. 1Sa. 1:28 ended, *So they worshipped the LORD there.*

Here is the worship Hannah offered, and what she offered on the very day she left her little boy - her only child - at the tabernacle, never for him to live in her home again.

b. **My heart rejoices in the LORD:** Here, Hannah shows a depth of commitment and love for God that humbles us. On the day she makes the biggest sacrifice she will ever make in her life, she **rejoices in the LORD!**

i. Notice though, that she **rejoices in the LORD**. She does not, and she can not, rejoice in the leaving of her son. But she

can, and she does, rejoice **in the LORD**. In the most desperate situations, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, we can

rejoice **in the LORD**.

c. **My horn is exalted in the LORD:** The **horn** is an often used as a picture of strength in the Bible (Psa. 75:4-5; 92:10). This is because the strength of an ox or a steer could be expressed in its **horn**. Hannah is speaking of her strength and power being **exalted in the LORD**.

i. "We have often seen that *horn* signifies power, might, and dominion. It is this constantly used in the Bible, and was so used among the heathens." (Clarke)

d. **I smile at my enemies:** Hannah has a strong sense of vindication over her rival, Elkanah's other wife Peninnah. Peninnah had

cruelly brought Hannah low (1Sa. 1:6-7), but now Hannah can rejoice because the LORD has lifted her up.

e. **There is none holy like the LORD:** In this verse, Hannah shows a classic form of Hebrew poetry - a repetitive parallelism. To say the LORD is **holy** is to say He is

completely set apart; that He is unique, and not like any other.

So, when she continues in the same verse and says, " **For there is none besides You,**" she is saying the same thing as " **There is none holy like the LORD,**" only saying it in different words. When she says, " **Nor is there any rock like our God,**" she is again saying the same thing in different words.

i. In this, Hebrew poetry does not rhyme words by sound, as much as it rhymes ideas.

The ideas of the three lines of 1Sa. 2:2 all rhyme together, having different words yet "sounding" the same.

ii. Beyond the literary structure, the idea is emphasized: God is so great, there is no one

- not one in all the universe - who compares

with Him. It isn't that He has the same

power and wisdom and purity we have, just

that He has more of it all. No, His power and wisdom and purity is of a different order

than ours, beyond ours.

2. (3) A warning to the arrogant and proud.

"Talk no more so very proudly;

Let no arrogance come from your mouth,

For the LORD *is* the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed."

a. **Talk no more so very proudly:** While Hannah certainly has her rival in mind, her "fellow-wife" Peninnah here. But in some way, she sees Peninnah as just a representative of all the proud and arrogant people in the world.

Hannah wisely tells the proud to **talk no more** and to **let no arrogance come from your mouth**. Pride can be expressed in many ways, but it usually is expressed by our words. The proud would be much better off if they would just not talk so much!

b. **For the LORD is the God of knowledge:** This, of course, is the best reason to forsake our pride. Next to God, we all know nothing, and since we are all far from God, we are all far from all knowledge. He knows us, and **by Him actions are weighed.**

3. (4-8a) Hannah gives glory to the God who often humiliates the strong and exalts the weak.

"The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength.

*Those who were full* have hired themselves out for bread,  
And the hungry have ceased *to hunger.*

Even the barren has borne seven,  
And she who has many children has become feeble.

The LORD kills and makes alive;

He brings down to the grave and brings up.

The LORD makes poor and makes rich;

He brings low and lifts up.

He raises the poor from the dust

*And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory."*

a. In her song, Hannah has warned against pride. Here, she gives more reasons why we should all be humble before the LORD (especially those like Peninnah, her rival!).

b. We should be humble before God because He knows how to humble the strong: **the bows of the mighty men are broken . . . those who were full** are now begging, and she **who has many children has become feeble**. If we are strong now, or exalted now, we should be humble, because the LORD can change our place quickly.

c. We should be humble before God because He knows how to exalt the weak. **Those who stumbled are girded with strength . . . those who were hungry have ceased to**

**hunger . . . even the barren has borne**

**seven.** If we are weak now, or in a low place, we should wait humbly before God and let Him lift us up.

i. In Luk. 14:7-11, Jesus said when we have the opportunity to set ourselves high, we should take a low place instead. Then, when someone sets us in a higher place, it will be a pleasant experience. But if we put ourselves in a high place, someone may come and set us in a lower place, and then we will be embarrassed. Jesus concluded by saying, *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

d. Hannah knew all this intimately in her life.

She was barren *because the LORD had closed her womb* (1Sa. 1:6). She knew **The LORD**

**makes poor and makes rich; He brings low**

**and lifts up.** God had first set her low, and then brought her high. She could see the hand of the LORD in it all.

4. (8b-10) Hannah's confidence in the future is really confidence in the LORD.

"For the pillars of the earth *are* the Lord's, And He has set the world upon them.

He will guard the feet of His saints,

But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

For by strength no man shall prevail.

The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces;

From heaven He will thunder against them.

The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

He will give strength to His king,

And exalt the horn of His anointed."

a. **For the pillars of the earth are the**

**LORD's:** Hannah is confident in God's ability to humble the strong and exalt the weak because God is in control. If God were not in control, then perhaps the strong could do what they

wanted and God couldn't do anything about it. But Hannah knew that the foundation of the earth itself (**the pillars of the earth**) belonged to the LORD.

b. God uses His power to set things right: **For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces.** It isn't enough for us to believe God has this power; we must know He will *use* it for His glory and righteousness.

c. **He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed:** At this time, Israel did not have a king, and seems to have not even wanted one. So when Hannah speaks of **His king**, she is looking ahead to the Messiah, who will finally set all wrongs right. He is **His anointed**.

i. This is the first place in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as the *Messiah*. "She first applied to him the remarkable epithet MESSIAH in Hebrew, CHRIST in Greek, and ANOINTED in English, which was adopted

by *David, Nathan, Ethan, Isaiah, Daniel*, and the succeeding prophets of the Old Testament; and by the apostles and inspired

writers of the New." (Hales, cited in Clarke) ii. Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist, quotes Hannah in Luk. 1:69, when he prophetically calls Jesus *a horn of salvation*, quoting from 1Sa. 2:10. Mary, the mother of Jesus, in her beautiful prayer found in Luk.

1:46-55, seems to quote Hannah's song often.

5. (11) Samuel ministers unto the LORD.

Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.

a. **Then Elkanah went:** They did it. It was hard to do, to leave this little son behind, but they did it because they promised God that is what they would do.

**b. But the child ministered to LORD before Eli the priest:** Young as he was, Samuel could have a ministry to the LORD. Our young people can praise God and please God and worship Him, and it is often a breakthrough in their walk with God when they experience God in worship.

i. The Living Bible translates it well: *And the child became the Lord's helper*. There are ways that even children can serve God and minister to Him.

B. The wicked sons of Eli, the high priest.

1. (12) The evil character of the sons of Eli.

Now the sons of Eli *were* corrupt; they did not know the LORD.

a. **The sons of Eli were corrupt:** Literally, the Hebrew calls them *sons of Belial*. *Belial* was a pagan god, and the phrase *sons of Belial* refers to worthless, wicked men. This was a significant problem, because the **sons of Eli** were to succeed him as high priest, and were already functioning in the priesthood.

b. **They did not know the LORD:** Even though their father Eli knew the LORD, that knowledge was not passed on genetically to the sons of Eli. They had to know the LORD for themselves.

i. It can be a difficult thing for a child to come to a true, genuine knowledge of the LORD when they have grown up in a Christian home. They just kind of assume they know the LORD because mom and dad do. But young people need to have a passionate commitment to knowing the LORD for themselves. And knowing *about* the LORD isn't enough; we must *know Him* ourselves, in a personal relationship.

2. (13-17) Their first offense: stealing what was offered to God.

And the priests' custom with the people *was that* when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling.

Then he would thrust *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.

Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who

sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." And *if* the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; *then* you may take *as much* as your heart desires," he would then answer him, " *No*, but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force." Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

a. **The priests' custom with the people:** With many of the sacrifices brought to the tabernacle, a portion was given to God, a

portion was given to the priest, and a portion was kept by the one bringing the offering.

According to other passages in the Old

Testament, the priest was supposed to receive a portion of the breast and the shoulder. But now, some four hundred years after the law of Moses was given, the priestly custom had changed -

they would not take the prescribed portion of the breast and shoulder, but take whatever the fork brought up out of the pot.

i. "Not contented with the breast and shoulder which were allotted to them by God, Exo. 29:27-28; Lev. 7:31, they took

also part of the offerer's share." (Poole) ii. It was bad enough for the priesthood in

general to change their practice from what



God had said in His word. But the sons of Eli went even beyond this!

b. The portion that was to be given to God was always to be given first, so it was wrong to take the priest's portion **before they burned the fat.**

i. The **fat** was thought to be the most luxurious, best part of the animal, so that was given to God. The idea was that God should always get the best, and God should get His portion first. But in their pride, the sons of Eli took their portion **before they burned the fat.**

c. **He will not take boiled meat from you, but raw:** Why did the sons of Eli want raw meat? Perhaps it was so they could prepare it anyway they pleased; or more likely, it was because raw meat was easier to sell, and they would sell meat and pocket the money.

i. "Boiled meat would not content them. But it ill becometh a servant of the Lord to be a slave to his palate. Christ biddeth his apostles when they come into a house, 'eat such things as are set before them,' if wholesome, though but homely. . . .

Commonly a wanton tooth is the harbinger to luxurious wantonness. Gluttony is the gallery that lechery walketh through." (Trapp)

d. **No, but you must give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force:** The greed of Eli's sons was so great, they did not hesitate to use violence and the threat of violence to get what they wanted.

i. **The priest's servant:** As is the case with many influential people, they have someone else do their "dirty" work. The sons of Eli themselves would not threaten or intimidate

those who brought their offerings to the LORD, but they would tell their servants to threaten and intimidate the worshippers. In

this, they felt they could be "above" their own corruption. Yet, the text says **the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD**. Of course, God was not pleased with the priest's servants. But God knew that this sin was the sin of the two young sons of Eli more than it was the sin of the priest's servants.

**e. For men abhorred the offering of the**

**LORD:** The greatness of the sin of Eli's sons was found in this - that they, through their greed, violence, and intimidation, made others not want to come and bring offerings to the

LORD. It was bad enough what they themselves were doing; but the greater sin of Eli's sons was in how they hurt other people.

i. "As the people saw that the priests had no piety, and that they acted as if there was no God; they despised God's service, and became infidels." (Clarke) "A wicked priest is the worst creature upon the earth. Who are devils, but they which were once angels of light?" (Trapp)

ii. Jesus said that whoever offends one of His little ones, it would be *better* for that one if a millstone (a very heavy stone) were tied around his neck and he were cast into the ocean (Mat. 18:6-7). Our self-destructive sins are bad enough; it is even worse when we destroy someone else.

iii. It is the same today with greedy, corrupt ministers, who make others hate **the offering of the LORD**. God will judge them by a high standard! (Jam. 3:1)

3. (18-21) The purity and service of Samuel and his family is a contrast to the evil character of Eli's sons.

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod. Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring *it* to him year by year when she

came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD." Then they would go to their own home.

And the LORD

visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

a. **But Samuel:** As bad as Eli's sons were, Samuel was different. Is this not why God raised up Samuel, because of the corruption of Eli's sons? God knew how Eli's sons were, so He guided the whole series of events that resulted in Samuel coming to serve at the tabernacle. If Eli's sons would not be worthy successors, then God would raise up someone else.

i. Ultimately, corrupt ministers do not stop - or even hinder - the work of God. Oh, it may look like it; but every time there are men like Eli's sons, God raises up someone like Samuel. God's work does not stop when God's ministers become corrupt.

ii. Why was Samuel godly and Eli's sons were not? It might be easy to say it was because Samuel grew up in a godly home and Eli's sons did not. But Eli does not seem to have been a particularly bad parent, though he obviously did some things wrong (as stated in the rest of the chapter). No, it would be wrong to give Eli all the blame for his sons, or to give Hannah all the credit for Samuel. There is a significant measure that, after all the parenting, is left up to the free will of the child.

b. **Wearing a linen ephod:** Samuel, even as a child, distinguished himself in his service to the LORD. His service was exceptional enough that he was given **a linen ephod**, which was a priestly garment (Exo. 39:27-29).

i. What did Samuel do? "He did small charges, as setting up lights, laying up vestments, learning music, or the like." (Trapp)

c. **Even as a child:** Though a child, Samuel is serving the LORD better, and in a greater way, than the sons of Eli are. What man looks at in the service of God is often not what the LORD looks at.

d. **His mother used to make him a little**

**robe:** How beautiful! Only someone who was really there would describe such a small detail.

Though Hannah gave her little boy to the LORD, she never stopped loving him.

e. **The LORD visited Hannah:** He certainly did! Three more sons, and two daughters! God will never be a debtor to anyone. Hannah could never say to the LORD, "I gave you my son, but what did you give me?" because God gave her much.

f. On **Samuel grew before the LORD:** "Not only before men, who might be deceived, but in the presence of the all-seeing God." (Poole) 4. (22) The second offense of Eli's sons: sexual immorality.

Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

a. **Now Eli was very old:** This passage is not focused on Eli's sons as much as it is on Eli himself. He was old, and in no condition to take the kind of leadership Israel needed from him as high priest. **He heard everything his sons did:** Eli heard about the evil acts of his sons; but what will he do about it?

b. **They lay with the women who**

**assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting:**

This means the sons of Eli were committing sexual immorality

with the women who came to *worship* at the tabernacle. It is an ancient version of modern "preacher sex scandal."

i. The two great sins of Eli's sons were that they stole from God's people (1Sa. 2:12-17)

and they committed sexual immorality with

women who came to worship at the

tabernacle. Both show the heart of a

*hireling*, of an unfaithful shepherd who cares more about what he can *get* from God's people than about what he can *give* God's people. In this sense, the sins of greed and sexual immorality are not far apart. They

often go together as the evidence of self-will and the abuse of power.

ii. It is possible that the **women who**

**assembled at the door of the**

**tabernacle** were in some way workers at the house of the LORD. Exo. 38:8 refers to *the serving women who assembled at the*

*door of the tabernacle of meeting.*

5. (23-26) The vain, ineffective rebuke of Eli to his sons.

So he said to them, "Why do you do such things?

For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. "No, my sons! For *it is* not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them. And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

a. **Why do you do such things?** It is an understandable question, but a needless one.

Who cares **why**? Could there ever be a justified reason?

They cannot excuse their sinful behavior, they had to be responsible for it

instead.

i. Eli did about the worst thing a parent can do in trying to correct their children: *just* talk. All he did was whine about what they were doing wrong, but he never took the necessary actions to correct the problem.

Parents would be better off to yell less, lecture less, and to take sensible action more often, letting the children see the consequences for their disobedience.

ii. Writing from the 17th century, John Trapp advises Eli on what he should have said:

"Draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore . . .

ye degenerate brood and sons of Belial, and not of Eli; ye brats of fathomless perdition . .

. It is stark stinking naught that I hear, and woe is me that I yet live to hear it; it had

been better that I had died long since, or

that you had been buried alive, than this to

live and stink above the ground." *That's* a lecture from dad!

**b. You make the LORD's people to**

**transgress:** Again, this was the great sin of Eli's sons. It was bad enough that they stole and indulged their own lusts; but they also, by their corrupt behavior, made people hate to worship God with their offerings at the tabernacle (1Sa. 2:17), and they led women worshippers into sexual immorality.

**c. If one man sins against another, God**

**will judge him. But if a man sins against**

**the LORD, who will intercede for him?** "All differences between man and man may be settled by the proper judge; but if a man sins against the Supreme Judge, God himself, who

shall reconcile him to his Maker?" (Clarke) i. Fortunately, 1Jo. 2:1 answer's Eli's

question: *And if anyone sins, we have an*

*Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Praise God, there is some to **intercede** for us when we sin **against the LORD!**

d. **Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD**

**desired to kill them:** This striking statement may seem unfair to some. They picture Eli's sons wanting to repent, wanting to heed the

voice of their father, but God preventing them.

This is not the case at all. Repentance is a gift from God, and if God chooses not to grant the gift, people will never *want* to repent. God judged Eli's sons this way: God gave them *exactly* what they wanted. They did not want to repent, and God did not work repentance in their hearts.

i. But what about the words, **the LORD**

**desired to kill them?** God saw they were corrupt men and wanted to judge them. All God did was right and just. Is it wrong to

desire justice? When **the LORD desired to**

**kill them**, it simply means that God desired justice towards Eli's sons.

e. **And the child Samuel grew in stature,**

**and in favor both with the LORD and men:** What a contrast to the wickedness of Eli's sons!

This shows that although Eli was far from a perfect father, he was not a chronically bad

father, because he essentially fathered Samuel and Samuel grew up to be a godly man.

i. We can't read 1Sa. 2:26 without thinking of Luk. 2:52, which describes Jesus'

boyhood: *And Jesus increased in wisdom*

*and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Samuel was in good company!

C. The announcement of God's judgment against Eli's house.

1. (27-33) An unknown **man of God** pronounces judgment to Eli: his family will be cut off from the office of High Priest.

Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him,  
"Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling place*, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed *that* your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. 'Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 'And you will see an enemy *in My dwelling place, despite* all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 'But any of your men *whom* I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age.'"

a. **Then a man of God:** We don't know who this was; this **man of God** is one of the wonderful anonymous characters of the Bible.

But it doesn't matter who he is; he is a **man of God**, and God has raised him up to speak to Eli and Eli's whole family at this important time.

b. **Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father:** The **father** referred to is *Aaron*, who was the first High Priest. Since the High Priesthood was



a hereditary office, Eli was a descendant of Aaron, whom God had revealed Himself to.

c. 1Sa. 2:28 is a wonderful summary of some of the duties of the priesthood in Israel.

i. **To be My priest:** First and foremost, the job of the High Priest was to minister unto the LORD. Before he served the people, he

was a servant of God. He was not first the people's priest (though he was that also, he was first the priest of God.

ii. **To offer upon My altar:** The priest was to bring forth sacrifices for atonement and worship. The altar was the place where

atoning blood was both shed and applied, blood that would cleanse from sin. The altar was also the place where the "sacrifice of praise" was brought.

iii. **To burn incense:** The burning of incense was always a picture of prayer, because the smoke and the scent of the incense would ascend up to the heavens. The priest was to lead the nation in prayer, and to pray for the nation.

iv. **To wear an ephod before Me:** The priest was clothed in specific garments, *for glory and for beauty* (Exo. 28:2). He was to represent the majesty, dignity, glory, and beauty of God to the people.

v. **All the offerings:** The priest was also charged with the responsibility to receive the offerings of God's people and to make good use of them.

c. **Why do you kick at My sacrifice:** It would have been easy for Eli to say, "I'm not doing it!

My sons are!" But Eli had a double accountability for his sons, both as a father (though this was diminished because the sons were adults), and as the High Priest. His sons

"worked" for him as a priests, and Eli was a bad "boss."

**d. And honor your sons more than Me:**

Since Eli would not correct his sons the way he should, either as a father or as a head over them, he was essentially preferring them to the LORD. If He would have been more afraid of offending God, and less afraid of offending his sons, he would have corrected them.

i. Eric Liddell was one of Britain's great athletes, and later he gave his life for Jesus on the mission field. In 1924 he was to run for Britain in the Olympic Games, when it was discovered that the preliminary heats of his best event, the 100 meters, would be run on a Sunday. Quietly but firmly, Liddell refused to run. The day of 400 meters race came, and as Liddell went to the starting blocks, an unknown man slipped a piece of paper in his hand with a quotation from 1Sa. 2:30: **Those who honor Me I will honor.**

That day Eric Liddel set a world's record in the 400 meters.

e. **I will cut off your arm:** Not literally, but since the **arm** was a picture of strength and might in Hebrew thinking (Psa. 10:15, 77:15, 89:10), this was saying that the house of Eli would be left powerless and without strength.

f. **'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD says:** God here promises that the priestly line would not stay with Eli and his descendants, but would pass to another line of descendants from Aaron.

This was fulfilled many years later, in Solomon's day; Abiathar (from Eli's family) was deposed as High Priest and replaced with Zadok (who was from another family).

i. 1Ki. 2:27 reads, *So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh.*

ii. Was God going back on His word when He said, **"I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever," but now the LORD**

**says?** Not at all. The promise referred to is a promise to Aaron in passages like Exo.

29:9. God did not remove the priesthood from the line of Aaron, but He did remove it from the line of Eli. Eli had *assumed* the promise was to him also, but God was going back on Eli's *assumption*, not on a promise made to Eli. The implicit promise made to Eli was conditional, and he failed to fulfill the conditions.

g. **There shall not be an old man in your house forever . . . And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age:** This idea is repeated three times in these few verses. God wants to emphasize that He will not bless the descendants of Eli with a long life.

i. **Shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart:** The descendants of Eli who do live a little longer will not live blessed lives.

They will be painful to observe.

2. (34-36) The sign and the promise: both sons will die on the same day.

"Now this *shall be* a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest *who* shall do according to what *is* in My heart and in My mind.

I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come *and* bow down to him for

a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread." ' "

a. **Now this shall be a sign to you:** Since the fulfillment of the judgment would be many years away (in the days of Solomon), God gave Eli an immediate sign to demonstrate His

truthfulness. Both of Eli's sons will die **in one day**, and Eli will see this, and know the judgment of God has come against his house, and that one day the priesthood will be removed from his family.

i. Just because something hasn't happened yet doesn't make it untrue. God's promise was sure, and He wanted Eli to know this.

b. **Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest:** Who is the **faithful priest** predicted here? He was a great priest, because he did **according to what is in [God's] heart and in [God's] mind**. He was a blessed priest, because God said of him, **I will build him a sure house, and he will walk before My anointed forever**.

i. This promise was partially fulfilled in *Samuel*, because he functioned as a godly priest, effectively replacing the ungodly sons of Eli.

ii. The promise was partially fulfilled in *Zadok*, in the days of Solomon, because he replaced Eli's family line in the priesthood.

iii. The promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:12-17).

iv. The lesson is emphasized through this chapter. God always has His priests.

Whenever there are weak priests (like Eli) or corrupt priests (like Hophni and Phinehas),

God will raise up great and godly priests to replace them.

**c. Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver:** This is a fitting judgment, since much of the sin of Eli's sons was greed and stealing from God's people. Instead of receiving the priestly portions which were rightfully theirs, Eli's family will one day be reduced to begging.

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** No one is holy like the LORD!

There is no one other than you!

There is no rock like our God!

**3** Don't keep speaking so arrogantly, letting proud talk come out of your mouth!

For the LORD is a God who knows;  
he evaluates what people do.

**4** The bows of warriors are shattered, but those who stumble find their strength reinforced.

**5** Those who are well-fed hire themselves out to earn food,  
but the hungry no longer lack.

Even the barren woman gives birth to seven,  
but the one with many children withers away.

**6** The LORD both kills and gives life; he brings down to the grave and raises up.

**7** The LORD impoverishes and makes wealthy; he humbles and he exalts.

**8** He lifts the weak from the dust; he raises the poor from the ash heap

to seat them with princes

and to bestow on them an honored position.

The foundations of the earth belong to the LORD, and he has placed the world on them.

**9** He watches over his holy ones, but the wicked are made speechless in the darkness, for it is not by one's own strength that one prevails.

**10** The LORD shatters his adversaries; he thunders against them from the heavens.

The LORD executes judgment to the ends of the earth.

He will strengthen his king  
and exalt the power of his anointed one.”

**11** Then Elkanah went back home to Ramah. But the boy was serving the LORD under the supervision of Eli the priest.

**12** The sons of Eli were wicked men. They did not recognize the LORD’s authority. **13** Now the priests would always treat the people in the following way: Whenever anyone was making a sacrifice, while the meat was boiling, the priest’s attendant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand.

**14** He would jab it into the basin, kettle, caldron, or pot, and everything that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they used to do to all the Israelites when they came there to Shiloh.

**15** Even before they burned the fat, the priest’s attendant would come and say to the person who was making the sacrifice, “Hand over some meat for the priest to roast! He won’t take boiled meat from you, but only raw.” **16** If the individual said to him, “First let the fat be burned away, and then take for yourself whatever you wish,” he would say, “No! Hand it over right now! If you don’t, I will take it forcibly!”

**17** The sin of these young men was very great in the LORD’s sight, for they treated the LORD’s offering with contempt.

**18** Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD. The boy was dressed in a linen ephod. **19** His mother used to make him a small robe and bring it up to him at regular intervals when she would go up with her husband to make the annual sacrifice. **20** Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife saying, “May the LORD raise up for you descendants from this woman to replace the one that she dedicated to the LORD.” Then they would go to their home. **21** So the LORD graciously attended to Hannah, and she was able to conceive and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.

The boy Samuel grew up at the LORD’s sanctuary.

**22** Now Eli was very old when he heard about everything that his sons used to do to all the people of Israel and how

they used to have sex with the women who were stationed at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

**23** He said to them, “Why do you behave in this way? For I hear about these evil things from all these people. **24**

This ought not to be, my sons! For the report that I hear circulating among the LORD’s people is not good. **25** If a man sins against a man, one may appeal to God on his behalf. But if a man sins against the LORD, who then will intercede for him?” But Eli’s sons would not listen to their father, for the LORD had decided to kill them.

**26** Now the boy Samuel was growing up and finding favor both with the LORD and with people.

**27** A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Did I not plainly reveal myself to your ancestor’s house when they were in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh? **28** I chose your ancestor from all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer sacrifice on my altar, to burn incense, and to bear the ephod before me. I gave to your ancestor’s house all the fire offerings made by the Israelites.

**29** Why are you scorning my sacrifice and my offering that I commanded for my dwelling place?

You have honored your sons more than you have me by having made yourselves fat from the best parts of all the offerings of my people Israel.’

**30** Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, says, ‘I really did say that your house and your ancestor’s house would serve me forever.’ But now the LORD says, ‘May it never be! For I will honor those who honor me, but those who despise me will be cursed! **31** In fact, days are coming when I will

remove your strength and the strength of your father’s house. There will not be an old man in your house! **32** You will see trouble in my dwelling place! Israel will experience blessings, but there will not be an old man in your house for all time. **33** Any one of you that I do not cut off from my

altar, I will cause your eyes to fail and will cause you grief. All of those born to your family will die in the prime of life.

**34** This will be a confirming sign for you that will be fulfilled through your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: in a single day they both will die! **35** Then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what is in my heart and soul. I will build for him a secure dynasty and he will serve my chosen one for all time. **36** Everyone who remains in your house will come to bow before him for a little money and for a scrap of bread. Each will say, 'Assign me to a priestly task so I can eat a scrap of bread.'"

**1** Now the boy Samuel continued serving the LORD under Eli's supervision. Word from the LORD was rare in those days; revelatory visions were infrequent.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 3:1-21

### **1 Samuel 3 - God Speaks to Samuel**

A. Samuel is unable to recognize God's voice.

1. (1) The scarcity of revelation in Israel.

Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; *there was* no widespread revelation.

a. **The boy Samuel ministered to the**

**LORD:** For the third time it is emphasized that Samuel **ministered to the LORD** (also in 1Sa.

2:11 and 18), just as Aaron and his sons at their consecration as priests (Exo. 29:1) and just like Paul and Barnabas before being sent out as missionaries (Act. 13:1-2).

b. **The word of the LORD was rare in those**

**days:** The only **word of the LORD** we read of in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel is the word of judgment brought by the man of God against Eli. God didn't speak often, and when He did, it was a word of judgment!

i. *Why* was **the word of the LORD rare in those days?** Probably, because of the hardness of heart among the people of

Israel and the corruption of the priesthood.

God will speak, and guide, when His people



seek Him, and when His ministers seek to serve Him diligently.

2. (2-4) God's first words to Samuel.

And it came to pass at that time, while Eli *was* lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God *was*, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

a. **His eyes had begun to grow so dim that**

**he could not see:** This was true spiritually of Eli, as much as it was physically. His old age had made him less able to effectively lead the nation.

b. **Before the lamp of God went out in the**

**tabernacle of the LORD:** As a figure of speech, this simply means "before dawn." But it is also suggestive of the dark spiritual times of Israel: it is dark, and will probably get darker.

i. Exo. 27:21 refers to the responsibility of the priests to tend the lamps until sunrise, or just before dawn.

c. **While Samuel was laying down to sleep,**

**that the LORD called Samuel:** How old was Samuel at this time? We don't know for certain; the ancient Jewish historian Josephus says Samuel was 12 years old at the time. However

old he was, God spoke to Samuel.

i. How does God speak? How did He speak to Samuel? Some people wait for God to speak in an audible voice, and others (some of them mentally disturbed) believe they hear God speaking in an audible voice. But most people believe God speaks to them by an "inner voice"; by the thoughts and feelings which may come into our hearts and our heads, which one believes are prompted by God.

ii. But this hearing from God is an uncertain business. God is not the only source of thoughts and feelings coming into our hearts and heads. Thoughts or feelings (good or bad) can come from ourselves, or they can also come from Satan. Peter, in Mat. 16:13-23, was at one moment speaking from God, and at the next moment speaking directly from the Devil.

iii. Because it is uncertain, there are three things to keep in mind. First, we must always judge what we think God may be telling us by what He has *certainly* told us in His Word, the Bible. God will *never* contradict His eternal Word. Second, we

should always be humble when it comes to the idea of God speaking to us. We can never completely trust our ability to hear from God by this "inner voice" accurately. It is easy for us to add something to what God has said, or to stop listening, or to misapply what He has said, or to think that it was God when it was ourselves or something else. It is far better to say and think, "I *think* the LORD told me . . ." than to talk and think as if you hear God perfectly. Finally, no one should feel "unspiritual" because they think God does not speak to them the way He seems to others. If you really want God to speak to you, and to speak to you the *best* way, get into God's Word, the Bible! We *know* He has spoken there!

d. **And he answered, "Here I am!"** This leads us to believe God spoke to Samuel in an audible voice, instead of in an "inner voice," though this is not certain. But Samuel was so impressed by what he heard, he responded by saying, **Here I am!**

i. What a beautiful way to respond to God's Word! It isn't that God does not know where

we are before we tell Him, but it tells God and it reminds us we are simply before Him as servants, asking what He wants us to do.

ii. Samuel is in pretty impressive company with this response to God. Here are some others who said, **Here I am** when the LORD spoke to them: Abraham (Gen. 22:1), Jacob (Gen. 46:2), Moses (Exo. 3:4), Isaiah (Isa. 6:8), and Ananias (Act. 9:10).

3. (5-9) Samuel doesn't recognize God voice.

So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD

yet revealed to him.) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'"

" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

a. **He ran to Eli:** What an obedient boy! He is wrong in thinking Eli was speaking to him, but he was right in what he did. If Eli was calling, he would run to Eli! After all, Eli was blind and might need Samuel's help.

b. **And the LORD called yet again:** When speaking to us, God almost always confirms His word again and again. It is generally wrong to do something dramatic in response to a single "inner voice" from the LORD. If God is speaking, He will confirm, and often in a variety of ways.

c. **Samuel did not yet know the LORD:** Here is Samuel, a godly, obedient boy, serving God wonderfully. Yet, he has not yet given his heart to the LORD. Even children raised in

the most godly home must be converted by the Spirit of God, and Samuel now is hearing God speak to his heart.

d. **Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears:** Samuel is given wise counsel by Eli. Eli tells Samuel to *make himself available for God to speak* (**Go, lie down**); he tells Samuel to *not be presumptuous about God speaking* (**if He calls you**); he tells Samuel to *respond* to the word of God (**Speak, LORD**); and he tells Samuel to *humble* himself before God and His word (**Your servant hears**).

e. **Speak, LORD:** We must hear from God. The preacher may speak, our parents may speak, our friends may speak, our teachers may speak, people on the radio or television may speak.

That is all fine, but their voices mean nothing for eternity unless God speaks through them.

i. Spurgeon expressed this well, by showing how one should pray: "'Speak, Lord!' While the minister is speaking, *Lord* do thou speak.

I have heard the minister's voice, and sometimes it awakens me, but I am not saved, and I never shall be, Lord, if the minister speaks alone. Speak, *Lord!* My mother has talked with me; my earnest teacher has sought to lead me to the Saviour; but I know that the words of blessed men and women will fall to the ground if they come alone . . . Oh, let it be to-night a real work of grace in my soul! Let divine power come and operate upon me."

B. God's message to Samuel.

1. (10) Samuel responds just as Eli told him.

Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

a. **Then the LORD came and stood and**

**called:** Because it seems to have been an audible voice, and because it says the LORD

**stood,** it may be that this was a unique appearing of the LORD to Samuel, perhaps in the person of Jesus before Bethlehem. Clearly, this was not a dream or a state of altered consciousness.

2. (11-14) God's message to Samuel: coming judgment on Eli and his house.

Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

a. **Both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle:** God is going to give young Samuel spectacular news. In other places in the Old Testament, *tingling ears* are a sign of that an especially severe judgment (2Ki. 21:12, Jer. 19:3). And, if **both ears** are tingling, it must be really shocking news!

i. Poole on **both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle:** "That not only those that feel it shall groan under it, but those that only hear the report of it shall be struck with such amazement and horror, which will make their heads and hearts ache."

b. **I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end:** God's judgment against the house of Eli would be complete. "Execution of justice is God's work, though his strange work (Isa. 28:21), and when he once beginneth, he will go

thorough-stitch with it: he will neither dally nor desist till it be done." (Trapp

<Expanded/Trapp.htm>)

c. **For I have told him that I will judge his house:**

Through the word of the *man of God* in 1Sa. 2:27-36, Eli has already heard of the judgment to come. This word, given to young

Samuel, is a word to *confirm* the previous message from God.

i. "When God had sent a man of God to Eli, and the message did not arouse him to a

sense of his sin in over-indulgence of his sons, and toleration of evil in those under him, the Lord sends him a word of

threatening by a child; for God has many messengers." (Spurgeon <Expanded/

Spurgeon.htm>)

d. **For the iniquity which he knows,**

**because his sons made themselves vile:** Eli **knows** of this iniquity, not only by his own observation, but because God has made it known to him by the message of the *man of God*. The **iniquity** is not directly his own, it is the sins of **his sons**, which Eli failed to confront and restrain.

e. **And he did not restrain them:** Eli's responsibility to restrain his sons was not only, or even mainly, because he was their father.

These were adult sons, no longer under Eli's

authority as sons as they were when they were younger. Eli's main responsibility to restrain his sons was as their "boss," because he was the high priest, and his sons were priests under his authority and supervision.

i. Eli's indulgence towards his sons as a *boss* was no doubt connected to his prior indulgence of them as a *parent*. "So, there is an age when children may be restrained, and if that age is allowed to pass the power of restraining them goes along with

it." (Blaikie <Expanded/biblio.htm>) f. **The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever**: What a terrible judgment! God is saying, "It's too late. Now, the opportunity for repentance is past. The judgment is sealed."

i. Probably, the judgment declared by the *man of God* in 1Sa. 2:27-36 was a warning, inviting repentance. Because there was no repentance, God confirmed the word of judgment through Samuel. Or, perhaps Eli had been pleading that God might withhold His judgment, and this is God's answer to that pleading.

ii. Do we ever come to a place where our sin cannot be **atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever**? Only if we reject the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin. As Heb. 10:26

says, if we reject the work of Jesus for us, *there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*.

Yet, we will *always* reject the work of Jesus for us unless God softens and speaks to our heart. Therefore, it is necessary we always

be responsive to the work of God in our hearts, so we can receive the atoning work of Jesus for us.

3. (15-18) Samuel tells Eli the message from God.

So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" And he answered, "Here I am." And he said, "What *is* the word that *the Lord* spoke to you? Please do not hide *it* from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you." Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It *is* the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

a. **Samuel lay down until morning:** Of course, he didn't sleep at all! Young Samuel, laying on his bed, ears tingling at the message from God, wondering how he could ever tell Eli such a powerful word of judgment (**Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision**).

b. **Opened the doors of the house of the LORD:** Presumably, this was one of Samuel's duties as a servant at the tabernacle.

c. **Samuel, my son!** Eli had not been a good boss, or a good parent, to Hophni and Phinehas. But Samuel was given to him as a "second chance," and Eli did a better job of raising Samuel than he did with his sons by birth.

d. **What is the thing that the LORD has said to you?** Eli had an idea of what the message of God to Samuel was. Kindly, he takes the initiative and asks Samuel, knowing it would be difficult for the young man to tell him.

i. "He suspected that God had threatened severe judgments, for he knew that his house was very criminal; and he wished to know what God had spoken." (Clarke <Expanded/Clarke.htm>)

ii. Eli made it clear to Samuel he had the responsibility to bring the message, even if it was bad news. With a threat like **God do so to you, and more also**, Samuel would be suitably motivated to tell Eli everything.

iii. Eli was admirable, because he was willing to be taught from an unexpected source, he wanted to hear the bad news of his condition, and he wanted to hear all of God's message.

e. **Then Samuel told him everything:** How hard it is to bring a message of judgment!

There may be a few, with hard hearts (like Jonah) who are happy to announce God's judgment, but most find it difficult. Yet, it is always the responsibility of God's messenger to bring **everything** God



says, not just the "easy" words.

i. It is a dangerous thing, both for the messenger and the hearers, when the messenger fails to tell **everything** God says. In the prophets, God says those who only bring a "good" or "happy" message *seduce* God's people: *Because they have seduced My people, saying, "Peace!" when there is no peace* (Eze. 13:10). God also says the messenger who doesn't say **everything** God says doesn't *help* his listeners: *They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, "Peace, peace!"*

*When there is no peace.* (Jer. 6:14)

ii. Paul could say of his own ministry, *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.* (Act. 20:26-27) Can the modern messenger of God say the same thing? If he cannot, he risks being *guilty* of the lives of others.

iii. "I cannot bear to be cast away for ever from the presence of God; yet this woe will be unto me if I preach not the gospel, and do not declare the whole counsel of God.

The result of sin and unbelief in others will fall on us if we do not warn them. O sirs, if we are unfaithful, God will deal with us at the day of judgment, as he will deal with the wicked; this is an awful outlook for us. May we never dare to tone down the more severe parts of the story, and flatter men in their sins; for if we do this, God will mete out to us a portion with the condemned!" (Spurgeon <Expanded/Spurgeon.htm>)

iv. "Bitter truths must be spoken, however they be taken; and if ministers be mannerly

in the form, yet in the matter of their message let them be resolute." (Trapp <Expanded/Trapp.htm>)

**f. It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems**

**good to Him:** It is hard to know if Eli's response here is godly, or fatalistic. If it is the submissive response of a heart that knows there is nothing which can stop God's judgment, his response is godly. But if he is missing another opportunity to repent, and get things right, and instead having the fatalistic, "whatever" kind of heart, his response is ungodly. Only God knows where Eli's heart was in this matter.

i. We should always submit to God's rod of correction. Yet, that submissive is not totally passive. It is also active in repentance, and doing what one can to cultivate a godly sorrow.

ii. "There is much of a godly submission, as well as a deep sense of his own unworthiness, found in these words. He had sinned, so as to be punished with *temporal death*; but surely there is no evidence that there is no evidence that the displeasure of the Lord against him extended to a future state." (Clarke <Expanded/Clarke.htm>) iii. Trapp says this was "a humble

submission to his heavenly Father: for if Eli had been an ill father to his sons, yet he was a good son to God."

C. Samuel matures and is established as a prophet.

1. (19-20) Samuel grows, maturing physically and spiritually. So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel *had been* established as a prophet of the LORD.

a. **The LORD was with him:** Is there anything better than this? To have, and to know you have, the LORD with you? For the Christian, we can know we have God with us: *If God is*

*for us, who can be against us?* (Rom. 8:31) i. William Newell, in his commentary on

Romans, speaks well to this point: "Our weak hearts, prone to legalism and unbelief, receive these words with great difficulty:

*God is for us . . .* They have failed Him; but He is *for* them. They are ignorant; but He is *for* them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit; but He is *for* them." God is not for us because we are so good, or so great, but because of who we are in Jesus. God is for you. God is with you, even if you are not as good as Samuel, because you have given to you the goodness of Jesus.

b. **Let none of his words fall to the ground:** This means all of Samuel's prophecies came to pass, and were known to be true words from God. Therefore, **all Israel . . . knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD.**

i. Since the days of Moses (some four hundred years before the time of Samuel) there have not been many prophets in Israel, and certainly no great prophets. Now, at this important time in Israel's history, God raises up Samuel as a prophet.

ii. Coming in this place in Israel's history, Samuel is rightly seen as Israel's last *judge* and first *prophet*. Samuel bridges the gap between the time of the judges, and the time of the monarchy when prophets (such as Nathan, Elijah, and Isaiah) spiritually influenced the nation.

iii. Through the book of judges, when God raised up a judge, he led the nation mostly through political and military influence. Samuel, as a judge, mainly led the nation by his spiritual influence.

c. **From Dan to Beersheba** is a way of saying

"from northernmost Israel to southernmost Israel." It carries a similar idea as saying in the United States, "from New York to California."

2. (21) The word of the LORD comes to Samuel.

Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

a. **The LORD appeared again in Shiloh:**

When did the LORD first appear in Shiloh? We know He appeared to Samuel in 1Sa. 3:10.

Now, in some undescribed way, the LORD appears again.

b. As the LORD appeared again, how did He reveal Himself? **The LORD revealed Himself .**

**. . by the word of the LORD.** God reveals Himself by His word. Whenever God is moving, He will reveal Himself **by the word of the LORD.**

*© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Eli's eyes had begun to fail, so that he was unable to see well. At that time he was lying down in his place, **3**

and the lamp of God had not yet been extinguished.

Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD as well; the ark of God was also there. **4** The LORD called to Samuel, and he replied, "Here I am!" **5** Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down." So he went back and lay down. **6** The LORD again called, "Samuel!" So Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you, my son. Go back and lie down."

**7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD; the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. **8** Then the LORD called Samuel a third time. So he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me!" Eli then realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. **9**

So Eli said to Samuel, "Go back and lie down. When he calls you, say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."

So Samuel went back and lay down in his place.

**10** Then the LORD came and stood nearby, calling as he had previously done, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel replied, "Speak, for your servant is listening!" **11** The LORD said to Samuel, "Look! I am about to do something in Israel; when anyone hears about it, both of his ears will tingle. **12**

On that day I will carry out against Eli everything that I spoke about his house - from start to finish! **13** You should tell him that I am about to judge his house forever because of the sin that he knew about. For his sons were cursing God, and he did not rebuke them. **14** Therefore I swore an oath to the house of Eli, 'The sin of the house of Eli can never be forgiven by sacrifice or by grain offering.'"

**15** So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the LORD's house. But Samuel was afraid to tell Eli about the vision. **16** However, Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" He replied, "Here I am." **17** Eli said, "What message did he speak to you? Don't conceal it from me. God will judge you severely if you conceal from me anything that he said to you!"

**18** So Samuel told him everything. He did not hold back anything from him. Eli said, "The LORD will do what he pleases." **19** Samuel continued to grow, and the LORD was with him. None of his prophecies fell to the ground unfulfilled. **20** All Israel from Dan to Beer Sheba realized that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. **21**

Then the LORD again appeared in Shiloh, for it was in Shiloh that the LORD had revealed himself to Samuel through the word of the LORD.

**1** Samuel revealed the word of the LORD to all Israel.

Then the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. They camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines camped at Aphek.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 4:1-22

***1 Samuel 4 - The Capture of the Ark of the***

## ***Covenant***

A. The Ark is captured.

1. (1-2) Israel is defeated before the Philistines.

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field.

a. **Israel went out to battle against the**

**Philistines:** During this time, there was no great world power (such as Egypt or Assyria) seeking to dominate the region. So, Israel's

battles were waged against her near neighbors, such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, or as

here, the **Philistines**.

i. Israel could compete on more equal terms with Moab and Ammon, but the Philistines had much influence from far away Greece.

Greek military equipment (such as helmets, shields, coats of mail, swords and spears) made the Philistines formidable opponents.

The Philistines were the first people in Canaan to process iron, and they made the most of it.

ii. The Philistines were an immigrant people from the military aristocracy of the island of Crete (Amo. 9:7). Small numbers of

Philistines were in the land at the time of Abraham, but they only came in force soon after Israel came to Canaan from Egypt.

They were organized into five city-states.

b. This was a difficult period for Israel. "Never did time seem more hopeless than when Samuel

arose. The Philistines, strengthened not merely by a constant influx of immigrants, but by the importation of arms from Greece, were fast reducing Israel to the condition of a subject race." (Smith, *Pulpit Commentary*) c. We shouldn't infer from the connection of **the word of the Samuel came to all Israel** and **Now Israel went out to battle** that the battle was led by the direction of Samuel's word.

Some manuscript traditions (evident in the Septuagint) make it clear the Philistines initiated this conflict.

d. The battle ended in disaster: **Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men.**

2. (3-4) The elders of Israel respond with a superstitious trust in the ark.

And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the Ark of the Covenant of God.

a. **Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant . . . it may save us from the hand of our**

**enemies:** The elders of Israel, after the battle with the Philistines, decided the next battle could be won if they took the **Ark of the Covenant** with their soldiers.

i. The **Ark of the Covenant** was the representation of the throne of God among the people of Israel. Kept in the most holy place of the tabernacle, it was never seen by the people. In that most holy place, only the high priest would enter and see the ark, and only once a year. Yet, they wanted to take

this representation of the throne of God out of the holy of holies (it could be moved when the tabernacle was to be moved), cover it, and take it into battle with them. It would give them confidence God was really with them.

ii. The ark had gone into battle before. The ark went in front of the marchers around the city of Jericho (Jos. 6:6-8). Moses told the priests to lead the ark into battle against the Midianites (Num. 31:6). Later, Saul brought the ark into battle (1Sa. 14:18), as did David (2Sa. 11:11). Later, during the rebellion launched by Absalom, David knew the ark was not a "lucky charm," so he sent it back to Jerusalem when he fled the city from Absalom (2Sa. 15:24-25).

b. The elders of Israel were right in seeing they needed help from God to win the battle. But they were wrong in the way they went about getting help. Instead of humbly repenting and seeking God, they turned to methods that God never approved. They only cared if it would *work*.

i. They believed the presence of the ark would make God work for them. "Their idea was that God should be *forced* to fight for them. If He was not willing to do it for their sake, He would have to do it for His honour's sake." (Ellison)

ii. Simply, they are tempting God. This is the very thing Satan encouraged Jesus to do in His wilderness temptation, trying to "force" God into a miracle by suggesting Jesus leap off the pinnacle of the temple.

iii. No doubt, it seemed like a brilliant suggestion. It would work for certain! They



must have been pleased to arrive at such a great solution.

c. But their belief is really only vain superstition.

They regard the ark as the ultimate "good luck charm" and believe they can't lose with it present. Notice their words:

**that it may save us from the hand of our enemies.**

They are looking to the ark to save them, not the LORD Himself.

i. "Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising

superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions; but we neglect the one thing needful . . . They forget the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life, and to seek to do his will by faith in Christ

Jesus." (Spurgeon)

ii. "There are plenty of Christians, like these elders, who, when they find themselves

beaten by the world and the devil, puzzle their brains to invent all sorts of reasons for God's smiting, except the true one, - their own departure from Him." (Maclaren)

d. Instead of trusting in the ark, they should be more concerned that the ark is being served,

and carried, by priests who have forsaken the LORD: **the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were with the Ark of the**

**Covenant of God.**

i. God had commanded the ark be carried and cared for by priests. They did the right thing in having priests to carry the ark. But they were doing a wrong thing, even if they did it in a right way.

3. (5) Israel's confidence in the Ark of the

Covenant.

And when the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook.

a. **All Israel shouted so loudly that the**

**earth shook:** Someone passing by Israel's camp would have thought something tremendous was happening. Certainly, this would have been considered a great church service, and many would think they were really trusting in God. But for all the appearances, it was really *nothing*. All their noise and excitement meant nothing because it wasn't grounded in God's truth.

i. The Israelites probably felt they were better than the Philistines because the Philistines were pagans, worshipping false gods. Yet the Israelites were thinking and acting just like pagans, thinking they could manipulate God, and force Him into doing what they wanted Him to do.

ii. "Had they *humbled* themselves, and *prayed* devoutly and fervently for success, they would have been heard and saved.

Their shouting proved both their vanity and irreligion." (Clarke)

b. "Now, beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the shout comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it flows deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and with shouting; and it is a happy thing when it does: but it can also sit still before the Lord, and that perhaps is a happier thing still." (Spurgeon) 4. (6-9) The Philistines' fear of the Ark of the Covenant.

Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What *does* the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews *mean*?"

Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. "Woe to us!

Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These *are* the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!"

a. We should compliment the Philistines on their understanding of the Ark of the Covenant (they knew it represented the presence of God), and on their knowledge of Israel's history.

i. They knew it was unusual - even unheard of - for the Israelites to bring the ark into battle (**For such a thing has never happened before**).

ii. They knew the God of Israel had defeated the Egyptians (**who struck the Egyptians**

**with all the plagues).**

b. **These mighty gods:** Even though they did not understand very much about God, the Philistines recognized the superiority of the God of Israel. Yet, they will not submit to God, but simply determine to fight against Him all the more. If they really believed their gods were greater than the God of Israel was, they should not have been worried. If they believed the God of Israel to be greater than their gods, they should have submitted to Him.

i. We, like them, often know God is greater and deserves our submission. Yet we often resist God as well, instead of submitting to Him. Knowledge wasn't their problem.

Submission to God was.

c. **Be strong and conduct yourselves like**

**men, you Philistines:** The presence of the ark has not made the Philistines feel like giving up.

Instead, it has made them feel they must fight all the harder to overcome the odds. They will show the courage that comes from desperation.

i. Godless Philistines can teach us something. Christians need to show more of this courage. Instead of giving up when things look bad, why not, trusting the LORD, fight all the harder? Why not dedicate yourself in submission to God all the more? Why not decide, God giving you the strength, you will not give up? Courage and persistence win many a victory, even some victories for evil. Shouldn't we show the same kind of courage and persistence for the LORD?

5. (10-11) The ark goes into battle and Israel is defeated worse than before.

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was

defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

a. **Israel was defeated:** There were three reasons for the great defeat. First, the Philistines fought with the courage of underdogs. Second, the Israelites felt that the battle would be easy with the ark of the

Covenant there, and did not try as hard. Finally, God did not bless Israel's superstitious belief in the power of the ark instead of the power of God.

i. We often make the same mistake the Israelites did. We believe that if God is with us, we don't need to try so hard. We think if God is on our side, the work will be easy.

That may not be true at all!

ii. As it turned out, God did *not* feel obligated to bless the Israelites just because they took the ark into battle. He wouldn't allow His arm to be twisted by the superstitions of the Israelites. God is a Person, not a genie to be summoned at the will of man. You can't manipulate God.

b. **There fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers:** Not only did Israel lose, they lost far worse than they did before taking the ark into battle. The loss which prompted them to take the ark saw *about four thousand men* of Israel fall (1Sa. 4:2). Here, more than seven times as many men of Israel are killed.

i. In the late 1970's, a five-line inscription was found on a grain silo in the ruins of Izbet Sarteh. When deciphered, it was found to contain a Philistine account of this battle, the capture of the ark, even specifically mentioning the priest Hophni. This is the earliest known extra-biblical reference to an Old Testament event.

c. Can it get worse? Yes. **The ark of God was captured.** The very "thing" they thought would win the battle was taken away! Israel had made an idol of the ark, and God often breaks of our idolatry by taking the idol away.

i. We can make good things idols. There was nothing wrong with the ark itself. God commanded them to make it. It was important to Israel. He told them to put the tablets of the law, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, in the ark. Yet, even a good thing like the ark can be made an idol, and God won't tolerate our idols.

ii. The **ark of God was captured.** But the God of the ark was still on the throne in heaven, and guiding these circumstances for

His glory. Israel thought they could ignore the God of the ark and find deliverance in the ark of God. But God showed He was greater than the ark.

d. Could it get worse? Yes. **The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.** The priests who were supposed to supervise the ark were killed in the battle. God promised the two sons of Eli would die on the same day as proof of His ultimate judgment on the house of Eli (1Sa.

2:34). Now the proof of judgment has come.

i. "They died apparently as they had lived, in the very act of dishonoring God." (Blaikie) B. Israel's great anguish at the loss of the ark.

1. (12-18) Eli hears of the loss of the Ark of the Covenant of God and dies.

Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told *it*, all the city cried out. When Eli heard

the noise of the outcry, he said, "What *does* the sound of this tumult *mean*?" And the man came quickly and told Eli. Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. Then the man said to Eli, "I *am* he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line." And he said, "What happened, my son?" So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people.

Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured."

Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

a. **A man of Benjamin ran from the battle**

**line the same day, and came to Shiloh:** The battle was fought near *Aphek* (1Sa. 4:1), and it was at least twenty miles from Aphek to Shiloh.

The messenger had a long way to go, the route was mostly up hill, and he carried very bad news.

i. Because the news was so bad, he came

**with his clothes torn and dirt on his**

**head.** These were some of the traditional signs of mourning. The messenger brought bad news, and he let his appearance reflect

how bad the news was.

ii. According to an unfounded Jewish tradition, this unnamed messenger from the tribe of **Benjamin** was a young Saul.

b. **Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the**

**ark of God:** Eli anxiously waited back at the tabernacle for news of the battle. Eli is rightly more concerned about the fate of the ark than the fate of his sons.

i. Why is he so nervous? He might have

been as foolishly confident as the soldiers of Israel were when the Ark of the Covenant came into their camp (1Sa. 4:5). Instead, Eli knows he has let the ark go on an unwise, superstitious errand, and his conscience makes him fear it will end in disaster.

c. As Eli hears the commotion in the city regarding the loss of the battle, the priests, and the ark, he asks for information, and the messenger tells him the story of bad to worse to worser to worst: **Israel has fled before the Philistines** (bad), **and there has been a great slaughter among the people** (worse).

**Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead** (worse); **and the ark of God has been captured** (worst).

d. **Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died**: Eli fell over and died at the news of the ark (**when he made mention of the ark of God**). It wasn't the news of Israel's loss in battle, or the slaughter of the army, or even the news of the death of his own sons, which killed him. It was the news that the Ark of the Covenant of God had been lost.

i. "No sword of a Philistine could have slain him any more powerfully; neither can you say whether his neck or his heart were broken first." (Trapp)

ii. God had promised that Eli's two sons were to die on the same day as a sign of judgment on the house of Eli (1Sa. 2:34).

God had *not* announced the promise that Eli would also die the same day. God tells us much in prophecy, but not everything. Some

of it is only seen in its fullness after it has already happened.

2. (19-22) More tragedy among the family of Eli.

Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was



with child, *due* to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard *it*. Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

a. Poor wife of Phinehas! Pregnant, she hears of the death of her husband, her brother-in-law, her father-in-law, a slaughter among the soldiers of Israel, a lost battle, and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant all on one day! The anguish is too great, and **labor pains came upon her**.

b. **Then she named the child Ichabod:** For a Jewish woman, news that a son had been born was wonderful news. But not for the wife of

Phinehas on this day. To reflect her anguish, and the national tragedy upon Israel, she names the child **Ichabod**, meaning, **"The glory has departed from Israel."**

i. **But she did not answer, nor did she regard it:** Her grief was so great, it overcame her maternal joy at the birth of her son. To her, the loss was total, and she herself even lost the desire to live.

c. **The glory has departed:** The glory of God, displayed by His presence in the Ark of the Covenant, had departed from Israel. The Philistines now held it.

i. Had the glory of God truly departed? In one sense, yes. The glory left when Israel stopped repenting and trusting God and started superstitiously trusting in the ark

itself. "The glory of God had indeed departed, but not because the ark of God had been captured; the ark had been captured because the glory had already departed." (Ellison)

ii. Tragically, the same could be said of many churches, many ministries, and many individual Christian lives: **the glory has departed**. There are still priests, there is still a tabernacle, but God is not enthroned in glory among them. There is the form of

godliness, without the power (2Ti. 3:5). You could write **Ichabod** across many churches, many ministries, many individual Christian lives!

iii. How could God allow something so terrible to happen? First, He allowed it as a righteous judgment upon Israel as a nation and the family of Eli. They simply received what they deserved. Secondly, God allowed it as a correction to the nation, so they would not trust in the ark of God, instead of trusting in the God of the ark. Finally, though it seemed so terrible to man, was it all that terrible to God? At this moment, was God wringing His hands in heaven, worried about how things would turn out? Worried about His own reputation? Worried about the Philistines and their gods? Looking at it this way, the glory had not departed one bit.

Instead, God was just *beginning* to show His glory.

iv. Many circumstances we regard as a calamity, God uses in a marvelous way to glorify Himself. Israel was right to be sad at the loss of life and the ark on that day. But they should have had confidence, knowing God was well able to take care of Himself.

v. "Thus as God was no loser by this event, so the Philistines were no gainers by it; and Israel, all things considered, received more good than hurt by it, as we shall see." (Poole)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The Philistines arranged their forces to fight Israel. As the battle spread out, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men in the battle line in the field.

**3** When the army came back to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why did the LORD let us be defeated today by the Philistines? Let's take with us the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. When it is with us, it will save us from the hand of our enemies.

**4** So the army sent to Shiloh, and they took from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits between the cherubim. Now the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. **5** When the ark of the covenant of the LORD arrived at the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the ground shook.

**6** When the Philistines heard the sound of the shout, they said, "What is this loud shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" Then they realized that the ark of the LORD had arrived at the camp. **7** The Philistines were scared because they thought that gods had come to the camp.

They said, "Too bad for us! We've never seen anything like this! **8** Too bad for us! Who can deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all sorts of plagues in the desert! **9** Be strong and act like men, you Philistines, or else you will wind up serving the Hebrews the way they have served you! Act like men and fight!"

**10** So the Philistines fought. Israel was defeated; they all ran home. The slaughter was very great; thirty thousand foot soldiers fell in battle. **11** The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were killed.

**12** On that day a Benjaminite ran from the battle lines and came to Shiloh. His clothes were torn and dirt was on his head. **13** When he arrived in Shiloh, Eli was sitting in his chair watching by the side of the road, for he was very worried about the ark of God. As the man entered the city to give his report, the whole city cried out.

**14** When Eli heard the outcry, he said, "What is this commotion?" The man quickly came and told Eli. **15** Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes looked straight ahead; he was unable to see.

**16** The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle lines! Just today I fled from the battle lines!" Eli asked, "How did things go, my son?" **17** The messenger replied, "Israel has fled from the Philistines! The army has suffered a great defeat! Your two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are dead! The ark of God has been captured!"

**18** When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward from his chair beside the gate. He broke his neck and died, for he was old and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years.

**19** His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas, was pregnant and close to giving birth. When she heard that the ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she doubled over and gave birth. But her labor pains were too much for her. **20** As she was dying, the women who were there with her said, "Don't be afraid! You have given birth to a son!" But she did not reply or pay any attention.

**21** She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," referring to the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. **22** She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God has been captured."

**1** Now the Philistines had captured the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 5:1-12

## ***1 Samuel 5 - The Ark of the Covenant among the Philistines***

A. The ark in Philistine city of Ashdod.

1. (1-5) God humiliates the idol Dagon.

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the temple of Dagon and set it by Dagon.

And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

a. According to other passages, after the Philistines defeated the Israeli army, they went on to destroy the city of Shiloh itself (Psa. 78:60-64, Jer. 7:12 and 26:9).

**b. They brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon:** No doubt, the Philistines were jubilant, and confident in the superiority of their god over the God of Israel. They had faced the God of Israel in battle, and believed their god Dagon had delivered them and defeated Israel. Now, the Ark of the Covenant of Israel's God stood as a trophy in the temple of their god Dagon. The victory was complete!

i. The Philistine god **Dagon** was represented with a half man, half fish figure, and was said to be the father of Baal.

ii. "This deity was a personification of the generative and vivifying principle of nature, for which the fish with its innumerable multiplication was especially adapted, to set forth the idea of the giver of all earthly

good." (Keil and Delitzsch)

c. **There was Dagon, fallen on its face to**

**the ground before the ark of the LORD:** Had the glory of God departed? Not at all! God was more than able to glorify Himself among the Philistines and their pagan gods. God made this nothing statue bow down in worship before Him!

i. God will glorify Himself. Sometimes, when men disgrace the glory of God, we fear God will go without glory. We think the glory has departed. But when men and women will not glorify God, God will glorify Himself. You can count on it!

ii. God is glorifying Himself, but man is resisting God's glory. See the Philistine priests, and the excuses they make? "Must have been an accident. Must have been an earthquake. Yes, some strange accident." All the while they refuse to give glory to God!

d. Imagine the horror of the Philistine priests when they entered the temple of Dagon the *next* morning. They not only saw their god bowing down before the LORD, they also saw the **head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold;**

**only the torso of Dagon was left of it.** An accident two days in a row? And now, the head and hands of Dagon broken?

How strange!

i. After seeing the superiority of the God of Israel, these Philistine priests had a choice.

They could turn from their weak, inferior god Dagon, and begin serving the mighty, superior LORD of Israel. Or they could make a religious tradition instead! They chose the religious tradition: **Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the**

**threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.**

ii. These Philistine priests, like men confronted with the truth today, rejected God *despite* the evidence, not *because* of the evidence. They wanted to believe it was an accident.

iii. How could they believe something so ridiculous? Because worshipping the LORD instead of Dagon meant a huge change in thinking and living. The Philistine priests were unwilling to make those changes. It was easier when they **took Dagon and set**

**it in its place again.** Setting Dagon up and gluing him together was easier than changing your life and your thinking.

e. " *The head* is the seat of wisdom; *the hands*, the instruments of action: both are cut off, to show that he had neither wisdom nor strength to defend himself nor his worshippers. Thus the priests, by concealing Dagon's shame before,

make it more evident and infamous." (Poole) 2. (6-8) The LORD afflicts the city of Ashdod with tumors.

But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how *it was*, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god." Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away.

a. **The hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod:** They would not listen when God struck down their statue of Dagon; they just set it up again. When

we close our ears to God, He often finds another way to speak to us, and we may not like the second way.

**b. He ravaged them and struck them with**

**tumors:** What were these **tumors**? Older commentators often describe them as hemorrhoids, and newer commentators often

describe them as signs of the bubonic plague.

Either way, they were bad.

i. "According to the Rabbins, swellings on the anus." (Keil and Delitzsch) "Beating Dagon upon his own dunghill, and smiting his worshippers on their hinder parts, paying their posteriors, as men used to deal with

puny boys." (Trapp) "The word *apholim*, from *aphal*, to be *elevated*, probably means the disease called the *bleeding piles*, which appears to have been accompanied with dysentery, bloody flux, and ulcerated anus." (<Clarke.htm>)

ii. "Of the numerous suggested identifications of the specific malady that struck the Philistines, bubonic plague remains the most likely: 'It is a disease characterized by an epidemic occurrence, by the appearance of tumours, by the production of panic amongst the affected population, by a high mortality rate, and by an association with mice or rats.'" (Wilkinson cited in Youngblood)

iii. " *Emerods*; a disease mentioned only here and Deu. 28:27 it was in the hinder parts. It is needless to inquire into the nature of it. It may suffice to know that it was a very sore disease, and not only very vexatious and tormenting, but also pernicious and mortal." (Poole)



c. The Septuagint adds this to verse six: "And the cities and the fields of all that region burst up, and mice were produced, and there was the confusion of a great death in the city." Some think this was originally in the Hebrew text, and explains why golden images of rats were included in the return of the ark (1Sa. 6:5).

i. In *Legends of the Jews*, Ginzberg is much more graphic: "This new plague consisted in mice crawling forth out of the earth, and jerking the entrails out of the bodies of the Philistines while they eased nature. If the Philistines sought to protect themselves by using brass vessels, the vessels burst at the touch of the mice, and, as before, the Philistines were at their mercy."

d. **Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath:** Instead of submitting to the God of Israel, they decided to get rid of Him. The problem is, we can't get rid of God.

We can do things to push Him away, but even the best of those are temporary. We must all face God, and stand before Him one day.

i. When God shows us how wrong our thinking is and how wrong our lives are, we may ignore Him, patch up our lives, establish religious ceremonies, or do the best we can in the midst of His judgment. We can try and push Him away, but we still have to stand before God one day.

B. The ark of God in Gath and Ekron.

1. (9) The Ark of the Covenant in the Philistine city of Gath. So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumors broke out on them.

a. **The hand of the LORD was against the**

**city with a very great destruction:** The city of Gath didn't do any better than the city of Ashdod. More of the destructive and painful **tumors broke out on them.**

2. (10-12) The Ark of the Covenant in the Philistine city of Ekron.

Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!" So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

**a. Therefore they sent the ark of God to**

**Ekron:** The Ark of the Covenant is now, among the Philistines, a "hot potato," burning every city where it stays. The **Ekronites** were not happy see the ark ("**They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!**" ), but they still wouldn't submit to the LORD God of Israel.

**b. Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place:** The Philistines, if they would have repented and turned towards the LORD, could have *benefited* from the ark. Instead, it became a curse and a judgment to them.

i. The same is true of the presence of God among us. Paul wrote, *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.* (2Co. 2:15-16) The work of Jesus on your behalf will either be the greatest blessing you have ever

known for all eternity or it will be the greatest witness of God's judgment against you. If you submit and surrender to God, it can be a blessing. If you refuse His voice and His heart towards you, it can be a curse. What will you decide?

c. No matter what we decide, no matter what the Israelites decided, no matter what the Philistines decided, God was going to glorify Himself. Period. The unfaithfulness and superstition of the Israelites couldn't deny God His glory. The pride and the arrogance of the Philistines could not take one bit of glory from God. God will be glorified; the only question is "Will we choose to enjoy it?"

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** The Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the temple of Dagon, where they positioned it beside Dagon. **3** When the residents of Ashdod got up early the next day, Dagon was lying on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him back in his place. **4** But when they got up early the following day, Dagon was again lying on the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and his two hands were sheared off and were lying at the threshold. Only Dagon's body was left intact. **5** (For this reason, to this very day, neither Dagon's priests nor anyone else who enters Dagon's temple step on Dagon's threshold in Ashdod.) **6** The LORD attacked the residents of Ashdod severely, bringing devastation on them. He struck the people of both Ashdod and the surrounding area with sores. **7** When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel should not remain with us, for he has attacked both us and our god Dagon!"

**8** So they assembled all the leaders of the Philistines and asked, "What should we do with the ark of the God of

Israel?" They replied, "The ark of the God of Israel should be moved to Gath." So they moved the ark of the God of Israel.

**9** But after it had been moved the LORD attacked that city as well, causing a great deal of panic. He struck all the people of that city with sores. **10** So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

But when the ark of God arrived at Ekron, the residents of Ekron cried out saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel here to kill our people!" **11** So they assembled all the leaders of the Philistines and said, "Get the ark of the God of Israel out of here! Let it go back to its own place so that it won't kill us and our people!" The terror of death was throughout the entire city; God was attacking them very severely there. **12** The people who did not die were struck with sores; the city's cry for help went all the way up to heaven.

**1** When the ark of the LORD had been in the land of the Philistines for seven months, Guzik - 1 Samuel 6:1-21

### ***1 Samuel 6 - The Ark of the Covenant Returned to Israel***

A. How will the Philistines get rid of the Ark of the Covenant?

1. (1-6) The priests of the Philistines suggest a way to relieve themselves of the burden of the ark.

Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it to its place." So they said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but by all means return *it* to Him *with* a trespass offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." Then they said, "What *is* the trespass offering which we shall return to Him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden rats, *according to* the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague *was* on all of you and on your lords.

Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and from your land. Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?"

**a. What shall we do with the ark of the**

**LORD?** When the Philistines first captured the Ark of the Covenant, they thought it was a great victory. They put it in the temple of their god Dagon as a trophy, with the message that their god was greater than the LORD. But because God glorified Himself in the temple of Dagon, then by striking the Philistines with plagues in whatever city the ark would come to rest, the Philistines began to regard the ark as a burden, not as a trophy.

i. More than any other thing on earth, the Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of the LORD God of Israel. The Philistines (like the Israelites who carried the ark into battle) therefore thought that when they had the ark, they "had" the LORD. But they did not "have" the LORD at all. He had them, He was in control, and now *they* are on the defensive. God doesn't have a problem, *they* do.

ii. Why did they keep it **seven months** at all? Because they were reluctant to give up such a wonderful "trophy" of what they at first felt was such a victory over the God of Israel. It can take a long time before we realize the futility of resisting God!

**b. By all means return it with a trespass**

**offering:** The Philistine priests knew enough to know they have offended the LORD God.

Therefore, they know they should do something to express their sorrow and repentance before the LORD.

c. **Five golden tumors and five golden rats:** The specific offering recognizes that it was the LORD who brought the plague upon the Philistines. They were saying, "We know these plagues were not accidents. We know the LORD God of Israel has caused them. We are apologizing to the LORD God and asking Him to turn away His anger."

i. We know the plague involved **tumors** (1Sa. 5:6, 9, 12). We had not been told in 1 Samuel 5 that the plague involved **rats**.

Some think the **tumors** were the result of bubonic plague, carried by **rats**. Others think the **rats** were part of another plague or calamity mentioned in 1Sa. 5:11: *For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.*

ii. Why would they put golden images of their tumors? "In testimony of their humiliation, that by leaving this monument of their own shame and misery they might obtain pity from God, and freedom from their disease." (Poole)

iii. "Verse 4, by linking tumors, rats, and plague, strengthens the theory that the tumors were symptoms of bubonic plague spread by an infestation of rats, which, like human invaders, were capable of destroying a country." (Youngblood)

d. **And you shall give glory to the God of Israel:** Acknowledging God's judgment one way to **give glory to the God of Israel**. We often fail to give God this glory because we ignore His judgment or write it off as fate or bad luck.

e. **Perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and from your land:** The Philistines are admitting that the God of Israel is judging their gods, and has jurisdiction over their lands. They are

confessing that He is the Almighty God, yet they will not worship Him instead of their own silly gods!

**f. Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?**

The Philistines rightly remembered that no good comes when anyone hardens their heart against the LORD. Even in a purely self-interested sense, it wasn't smart to harden your heart against the LORD.

i. Even as it was shown in 1Sa. 4:8, the Philistines were quite aware of the Exodus story. Here, they even know that **the**

**Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their**

**hearts**. Perhaps they had been reading in Exo. 8:15?

ii. The issue of hardening the heart is important, because Exodus also quotes the LORD saying, " *I will harden Pharaoh's heart*" (Exo. 7:3). So, who hardened Pharaoh's heart? The answer is "both." God did not harden Pharaoh's heart against Pharaoh's own desire. It was not as if

Pharaoh wished to have a tender heart towards Israel, but God would not allow him.

Pharaoh hardened his heart, and God confirmed him in his desire to have a hard heart.

iii. Hardness of heart is a terrible place for any Christian. The pagan Philistines had the

sense to ask the question, **why then do**

**you harden your hearts as the**

**Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their**

**hearts?** Do Christians today have the sense to ask themselves the same question? Hos.

10:12 speaks to our hardened, fallow

hearts: *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.* The Philistines

would prevent or cure hardness of heart by acknowledging their sin, God's righteousness, and *doing* something to make it right before God.

2. (7-9) The Philistines decide *how* to return the ark, including a test to see if the judgment was from God or by chance.

"Now therefore, make a new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. Then take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him *as* a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it away, and let it go. And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, *then* He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that *it is* not His hand *that* struck us; it happened to us by chance."

a. **Take two milk cows which have never been yoked:**

Here, the Philistines are conducting an experiment. They *think* all the calamity of the plagues has been from the LORD God of Israel. But they are not 100% sure. So, they devise another test. After all, one never wants to repent unnecessarily!

i. The test was simple, and stacked against

God. By nature, **two milk cows which**

**have never been yoked** should not pull a cart at all, but they should have resisted their yokes. Additionally, they decided to

**take their calves home, away from**

**them.** The "maternal instinct" of the cows would have drawn them not towards the land of Israel, but back home to their own

calves. The Philistines devised a test that



"forced" the God of Israel to do something miraculous to demonstrate He had really been the cause of the plagues upon them.

ii. "Such untamed heifers are wanton, and apt to wander, and keep no certain and

constant paths, as oxen accustomed to the yoke do, and therefore were most unlikely to

keep the direct road to Israel's land." (Poole) b. **Take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart:** God never wanted the ark to be transported by a cart. He wanted it to be carried by the poles that were set in it (Num. 4:15).

i. The ark didn't have "handles" and was not to be carried by lifting it directly in one's hands. Instead, it was to be carried by inserting gold-overlaid wood poles into gold

rings at each corner of the ark. The poles were to remain inserted in the rings, and to be the source of contact with the ark. Apart from touching the poles, it was forbidden to touch the ark of the Covenant (Exo. 25:12-15).

ii. In 2Sa. 6:6-7, Uzzah touched the ark to keep it from falling off a cart, but he did not touch it at the poles, and God struck him

dead. Uzzah was wrong in his thinking that God would let the ark be damaged; in fact, it *did not* fall off the cart, and no thanks to Uzzah. Uzzah was also wrong in his thinking that there was something less pure about

the ground than his act of pure disobedience.

iii. In light of God's command, and punishment against Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6, why did God allow the Philistines to carry the ark by a cart without bringing severe

judgment? Though this way of transporting the ark was prohibited by the law, God

excused them because of their ignorance of His law. "God winked at in them, both because they were ignorant of God's law to the contrary, and because they had no Levites to carry it upon their shoulders." (Poole)

iv. Do some object and say, "That isn't fair!" Do we want complete fairness from God? Will we allow Him to show mercy where He wants to show mercy, or do we demand that He immediately judge each sin, each sinner, to the fullest extent of what that sin, what that sinner, deserves? Do we really want God to treat *us* that way, or only others?

c. **Put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a trespass offering in a chest by its side:** The Philistines were wise enough to not open the Ark of the Covenant, and set the **articles of gold** in the ark itself.

Certainly, they were curious about what was in the ark, but they didn't let their curiosity lead them into sin.

d. **If not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us; it was by chance that it happened to us:** Is it possible that the tumors and other judgments came **by chance**?

i. Many people think things happen **by chance**. Some say the world was created **by chance**. People who are otherwise intelligent often fall into this delusion.

Jacques Monod, a biochemist, wrote:

"Chance *alone* is at the source of every innovation, of all creation in the biosphere.

Pure chance, absolutely free but blind, at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution."

ii. But assigning such power to "chance" is crazy because chance has no power. For example, when a coin is flipped, the chance that it will land "heads" is 50%. However, "chance" does not make it land heads.

Whether or not it lands heads or tails is due to the strength with which the coin is flipped, the amount of air currents and air pressure as it flies through the air, where it is caught, and if it is flipped over once it is caught. *Chance* doesn't "do" anything other than describe a probability.

iii. When Carl Sagan petitioned the federal government for a grant to search for intelligent life in outer space, how did he hope to find it? By using a super sensitive instrument that could pick up radio signals from distant space. When he received those radio signals, he looked for order and pattern - which would demonstrate that the signals were transmitted by intelligent life. In the same way, the order and pattern of the whole universe demonstrates that it was fashioned by intelligent life, not by "chance."

Scientists detect "chance" in the radio signals constantly (in the form of unpatterned static), but it tells them *nothing*.

iv. Therefore, when someone says that the universe or anything else came about by chance, they are extremely ignorant, superstitious, or just parroting a line they have heard before and have unthinkingly accepted. Chance makes nothing happen; it is merely a way of described statistical probabilities. We live in a cause and effect world, and *chance* is not a cause, but God is the great cause.

v. Realizing that nothing happens by chance should not make us think every event is full of important meaning from God. Some things just happen and have no great eternal purpose that we can discern.

Christians can get off track by trying to see a message from God in everything. But

*nothing* happens by chance. We live in a cause and effect world. "But wicked men will sooner believe the most uncertain and ridiculous things, than own the visible demonstrations of God's power and providence." (Poole)

e. What will happen? When unbelievers put God to the test, sometimes He ignores their arrogant action. But sometimes He blows their mind by doing what they never expected He would do.

3. (10-12) Against all expectation, the cows go the land of Israel.

Then the men did so; they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they set the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors. Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh, *and* went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right hand or the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh.

a. **Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh:** They should not have done this. The cows should have been resisting the yoke, because they had never been harnessed before. They should have headed back for their Philistine homes out of concern for their young calves. But they **headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh**. God wasn't leaving this up to chance!

i. Not only were they **headed straight for**

**the road, they did not turn aside to the right hand or the left.** They didn't meander around the way; they went straight

where they were supposed to go!

ii. What a miracle! Two cows who had never pulled a cart before, either alone or together. No driver leads them, yet they leave home, and march the ten miles or so to a city they had never been to. They leave their own calves behind, and go straight on a certain road, with never a wrong turn, never a stop, never turning aside into the fields to feed themselves, never turning back to feed their own calves.

iii. As the cows are on the road back to Israel, can you see the Israelites mourning over the loss of the ark? Perhaps at that very moment they were crying out to God, grieving because they thought the glory had departed. God's glory had left *anywhere*! The Israelites and the Philistines were both resisting Him, so the LORD found a few cows to show His glory through! Israel had no reason to mourn, even though they thought all was lost and there was no hope, because they thought the glory had departed.

b. **Lowning as they went:** This means the cows were not especially happy. They were longing for their calves at home, yet they still did the will of God.

i. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* on the ancient Hebrew word *ga-ah*, translated **lowning**: "This root indicates an intense aversion which is expressed often in punitive or adverse action."

iii. God was able to overpower the instinctive nature of the cows. He can overpower our

instinctive nature also. Who we are in Jesus has more power than who we are in Adam.

c. In *Legends of the Jews*, Ginzberg quotes the rabbis, saying the cows sang a song as they went:

Arise, thou, O Acacia! Soar aloft in the glory of thy splendor,  
Thou who are adorned with gold embroidery.

Thou who are revered within the Holiest of the palace,

Thou who are covered by the two Cherubim!

d. This all shows us the incredible power of God. He leaves nothing to *chance*. This is our Father's world, and even the cows fulfill His plan!

i. But if everything is fulfilling God's plan, then how come my life is so tough? Why did

I have, or someone else have, such a great tragedy?

ii. When we think like this, it shows we don't understand God's *goal* for our life, which is to make us *godly*, not to just make us *comfortable*. It also shows we are looking too *short*, and not trusting God to work things out in *eternity*. It also shows we are looking too *narrow* and don't consider all God is doing outside of what we can see.

Finally, it shows we are looking to *ourselves* and acting as if God owes us an explanation on everything. We have to accept there are

going to be some things we just can't figure out, and leave it up to God to figure those things out.

iii. When people don't believe there is a loving God who sits enthroned in the heavens and has a good plan for our lives, you can't blame them for being *afraid*, for being *proud*, for being *miserable*. But for those who believe in the God of the Bible, there is no excuse for fear, pride, or misery.

God is still on His throne! "As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all things is towards the accomplishment of God's purpose." (Meyer) B. The Ark at Beth Shemesh.

1. (13-15) The ark is received with honor and joy at Beth Shemesh.

Now *the people of* Beth Shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley; and they lifted their eyes and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*.

Then the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood there; a large stone

*was* there. So they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.

The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest that *was* with it, in which *were* the articles of gold, and put *them* on the large stone.

Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices the same day to the LORD.

a. **Rejoiced to see it:** What joy! They would have felt something like the disciples felt on the day they saw the resurrected Jesus, because they would have felt they had received God

back to them from the dead. On this day as

they were **reaping their wheat harvest**

(between May and June), they knew the God of Israel was alive.

i. Of course, God had never been dead, and

God never left them. But the Israelites *felt* as though God was dead, and they were as desperate, discouraged, and hopeless as if

He really were dead. According to their

feelings, it was as if the LORD God of Israel had risen from the dead.

b. **The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood there:** After being guided for some

ten miles from the Philistine city, without stopping or go to one side or the other, now the ark stops in Israelite land, at the exact field of one chosen man.

**c. They split the wood of the cart and**

**offered the cows as a burnt offering:** They knew this was the right thing to do in honor to God, yet it really cost them something. Cows and carts were expensive property.

i. In a strict sense, their offering was against the Mosaic law.

First, they offered female

animals to the LORD, which was forbidden

(Lev. 1:3; 22:19). Second, they made a

burnt offering to the LORD away from the

tabernacle, which violated the command in

Deu. 12:5-6 (though, since the Ark of the

Covenant was there, it might be said that

the holy place was "there"). Yet, God knew both their hearts

and the remarkable

circumstances and was no doubt honored.

**d. The Levites took down the ark of the**

**LORD:** The Israelites were careful to let the Levites handle the ark, as was commanded by the law (Num. 4:1-6, 15).

Beth Shemesh was a

priestly city (Jos. 21:16), so there were priests on hand.

2. (16-18) Description of the trespass offering from the Philistines included with the return of the ark.

So when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day. These *are* the golden tumors which the Philistines returned *as* a trespass offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; and the golden rats, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging to* the five lords, *both* fortified cities and country villages, even as far as the large *stone of* Abel on which they set the ark of the LORD, *which stone remains* to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

**a. When the five lords of the Philistines**



**had seen it:** They had wondered if all what had happened to them while they had the ark was an accident. So, they set up an elaborate and difficult test for God to fulfill, and the personally observed, to see if God would indeed meet the test. Their reaction isn't recorded, but they must have been persuaded! The LORD God of Israel had glorified Himself before the Philistines!

3. (19) The men of Beth Shemesh profane God's holiness. Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

**a. Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into**

**the ark of the LORD:** The Ark of the Covenant was a box, and box containing sacred things (Exo. 25:16 and 16:33-34, Num. 17:3-4). It was only to be touched and handled by specific

Levites from the family of Kohath, and even they were commanded to not touch the ark itself (Num. 4:15). But the men of Beth Shemesh sinned by not only touching the ark, but also looking into it inappropriately.

i. We again notice God is dealing with the Israelites more strictly than He dealt with the Philistines, who just transported the ark by a cart. God does this because the Israelites, who had His law, should have, and did know better. Even so, it is sad to consider that the Philistines showed more honor to the holiness of God than the Israelites.

ii. "Men are very incompetent judges of these matters, because they do not

understand all the reasons and causes of God's judgments . . . there are many secret sins which escape man's observation, but are seen by God, before whom many persons may be deeply guilty, whom men esteem innocent and virtuous. And therefore men should take heed of censuring the judgments of God, of which it is most truly said, that they are oft secret, but never unrighteous." (Poole)

**b. Because they looked into the ark of the LORD:** There are things, because of the honor and glory of God, which He has chosen to keep hidden, and it is wrong for men to pry into these secrets of God.

i. In the book of Job, the friends of Job tried to explain the crisis in his life by saying it was because he had sinned, and all he needed to do was to repent and things would be fine again. This frustrated Job, because he knew he had not sinned in any way to bring the crisis upon himself. So, Job demanded that God tell him why the crisis and come, and so vindicate Job in front of his friends. But when Job demanded God tell him "why," God responded: *Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me* (Job. 38:2-3). There were secrets in the heart and mind of God, which Job had no right to demand to know, and the LORD had to deal with Job about this.

ii. Isa. 55:8-9 shows this same thought: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."* We need to respect the fact that God is God and we are not, and there are some things we just will

not, and should not, know.

iii. John Trapp writes, "Peter giveth charge against curiosity, as against theft or murder," then he cites 1Pe. 4:15: *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.* It is bad enough when we don't mind our own business in regard to other people, but it is far worse when we don't mind our own business in regard to the LORD.

**c. He struck fifty thousand and seventy**

**men of the people:** The manuscript evidence is pretty clear that the number recorded originally in the text was **seventy**, not **fifty thousand and seventy**. **Seventy** men dead in such an incident is still **a great slaughter**.

i. Basically, the Hebrew grammar can mean that out of fifty thousand men, God struck seventy of them.

ii. "We cannot come to any other conclusion than that the number 50,000 is neither correct nor genuine, but a gloss which has crept into the text through some oversight." (Keil and Delitzsch)

4. (20-21) The men of Beth Shemesh appeal to the men of Kirath Jearim to take the ark from them.

And the men of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?" So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down *and* take it up with you."

**a. Who is able to stand before this holy**

**LORD God?** In their disrespect for God, the men of Beth Shemesh had offended the holiness of the LORD. Now, they know the **LORD** is **holy**, but it doesn't make them want to

be closer to God; it makes them want to distance themselves from God.

i. One of the more successful movies of the 1990's was a film titled *Ghost*. To see why the movie has been so successful, the studio took out a classified ad asking for response

from people who had seen the movie six or more times. They had hundreds and hundreds of responses. One Burbank mother of two saw it more than seventeen times. An Ontario nurse racked up a dozen. A bank manager from Los Angeles said he watched it eight times. Why? The movie dealt with something that we are all attracted to, yet afraid of: the supernatural, something from another world. When modern man is

interested in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* or *Cocoon* or *E.T.* or *Field of Dreams* or *Ghost*, we are trying, in our awkwardly modern way, to understand something beyond ourselves, something mysterious, and something *different*. But the Bible tells us what that different thing we are looking for is all about. It is God. It is His holiness.

The essential idea behind the word for holiness in the Bible is something different, something set apart.

ii. The primary idea behind holiness is not moral purity (though the idea includes moral purity), but it is the idea of *apartness* - that God is separate, different from His creation, both in His essential nature and in the perfection of His attributes.

iii. When men encounter the holiness of God, they are not necessarily attracted to it.

When Peter saw the holy power of Jesus he said, "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*" (Luk. 5:8). When the disciples on another occasion saw the holy

Jesus shining forth at the transfiguration, they were greatly afraid (Mat. 17:6). When we see how different God is from us, it can be frightening: *Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.* (Psa. 96:9) When we meet the holy God, we are excited and afraid all at the same time. It's like going up on a roller coaster; you want to be there, but you don't. In fact, many of the thrill-seeking pleasures of our modern world are nothing but feeble attempts to imitate the fulfillment we can only find by meeting the holy God.

**b. Who is able to stand before this holy**

**LORD God?** In one sense, the men of Beth Shemesh show a bad heart in asking this question. Their question makes God seem too

harsh instead of showing themselves to be too disobedient.

i. "Why this exclamation? They knew that God had forbidden any to touch his ark but

the priests and the Levites; but they

endeavoured to throw that blame on God, as

a Being *hard to be pleased*, which belonged solely to themselves." (Clarke) ii. "Here they seem peevishly to lay

the blame of their sufferings upon God, as over-holy and strict: of their sins, the true cause, they say nothing; but take care to rid their hands of the ark, which they should have

retained reverently." (Trapp)

**c. Who is able to stand before this holy**

**LORD God?** In another sense, the men of Beth Shemesh ask a good question. God is, in fact, holy, and **Who is able** indeed?

i. Holiness is not so much achieved through

our own efforts, but it is received, as we are new men and women in Jesus. Holiness is

part of the new man we are in Jesus (Eph.

4:24), and we are invited to be partakers - sharers of Jesus' holiness (Heb. 12:10).

ii. Though God is holy, though He is apart from us, instead of building a wall around His *apartness*, God calls us to come to Him and share His *apartness*. As it says in 1Pe.

1:6, God calls us to *Be holy, for I am holy*.

Holiness is not so much something we have, as much as it is something that has us.

d. **And to whom shall it go up from us?** For the men of Beth Shemesh, the holiness of God was a problem, a problem that could be fixed by putting distance between themselves and God.

Their question was not, "How can we be made right with a holy God," but it was "Who can we give this problem to so the holiness of God is no longer a burden to us?"

e. **They sent messengers to the**

**inhabitants of Kirath Jearim:** We don't know why they picked this village. Perhaps they had good relations with these men and thought they would take good care of the ark. Perhaps they had bad relations with them and wanted the LORD to curse them. Whatever the reason, the men of **Kirath Jearim** will indeed receive the ark, and the ark will stay there some seventy years until David brings it to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6).

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** the Philistines called the priests and the omen readers, saying, "What should we do with the ark of the LORD?

Advise us as to how we should send it back to its place."

**3** They replied, "If you are going to send the ark of the God of Israel back, don't send it away empty. Be sure to return it with a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and you will understand why his hand is not removed from you." **4** They

inquired, "What is the guilt offering that we should send to him?"

They replied, "The Philistine leaders number five. So send five gold sores and five gold mice, for it is the same plague that has afflicted both you and your leaders. **5** You should make images of the sores and images of the mice that are destroying the land. You should honor the God of Israel.

Perhaps he will release his grip on you, your gods, and your land. **6** Why harden your hearts like the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When God treated them harshly, didn't the Egyptians send the Israelites on their way? **7** So now go and make a new cart. Get two cows that have calves and that have never had a yoke placed on them. Harness the cows to the cart and take their calves from them back to their stalls.

**8** Then take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, and put in a chest beside it the gold objects you are sending to him as a guilt offering. You should then send it on its way.

**9** But keep an eye on it. If it should go up by the way of its own border to Beth Shemesh, then he has brought this great calamity on us. But if that is not the case, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us; rather, it just happened to us by accident."

**10** So the men did as instructed. They took two cows that had calves and harnessed them to a cart; they also removed their calves to their stalls. **11** They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, along with the chest, the gold mice, and the images of the sores. **12** Then the cows went directly on the road to Beth Shemesh. They went along, mooing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left. The leaders of the Philistines were walking along behind them all the way to the border of Beth Shemesh.

**13** Now the residents of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they were pleased at the sight. **14** The cart was coming to the field of Joshua, who was from Beth Shemesh. It paused there near a big stone. Then they cut up the wood of the cart

and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. **15** The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest that was with it, which contained the gold objects. They placed them near the big stone. At that time the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. **16** The five leaders of the Philistines watched what was happening and then returned to Ekron on the same day.

**17** These are the gold sores that the Philistines brought as a guilt offering to the LORD – one for each of the following cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

**18** The gold mice corresponded in number to all the Philistine cities of the five leaders, from the fortified cities to hamlet villages, to greater Abel, where they positioned the ark of the LORD until this very day in the field of Joshua who was from Beth Shemesh.

**19** But the LORD struck down some of the people of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD; he struck down 50,070 of the men. The people grieved because the LORD had struck the people with a hard blow.

**20** The residents of Beth Shemesh asked, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?”

**21** So they sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down here and take it back home with you.”

**1** Then the people of Kiriath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD; they brought it to the house of Abinadab located on the hill. They consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 7:1-17

### ***1 Samuel 7 - Samuel as Judge***

A. Samuel leads the nation in repentance.

1. (1-2) The ark at Kirath Jearim.

Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the



house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

a. The **men of Kirath Jearim** treated the Ark of the Covenant with respect and honor; yet they did not take it to the tabernacle. Instead of the ark resting in the holy of holies, at the house of God, it was brought **into the house of Abinadab**.

b. Yet, they **consecrated Eleazar his son to the keep the ark of the LORD**. We don't know if Eleazar was of the proper priestly lineage, or if his consecration ceremony was like the ones that truly consecrated a priest (Exodus 29). But it all reflected at least a *desire* to do the right things.

c. It stayed this way **a long time**. Israel had the ark back; but things were not really set right. Israel finds they are no more right with God just because they have the Ark of the Covenant again. Instead, **all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD**.

i. They had good reason to lament. Their cities were in ruins, their armies were defeated, and they were under Philistine domination, all because they were not right with God.

ii. "It may very naturally be asked, 'Where was Samuel all that time?' I know not what

he was doing during those twenty years; but I have a suspicion, I may say, I have a firm persuasion, that he was going from place to place, preaching in quiet spots wherever he could gather an audience; warning the people of their sin, and stirring them up to seek Jehovah, this endeavouring to infuse some spirituality into their national life." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) Samuel preaches repentance, both outward and inward.

Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

a. **Then Samuel spoke to all the house of**

**Israel:** God had raised up Samuel as a prophet and a judge (1Sa. 4:1). Yet, Samuel is strangely absent from the whole Ark of the Covenant fiasco. 1Sa. 4:1 was the last place Samuel was mentioned, right before Israel schemed to use the ark as good luck charm in battle.

b. **If you return with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods:** Samuel was calling the nation to repentance. The repentance had to be *inward* (**with all your hearts**), and it had to be *outward* (**put away the foreign gods**).

i. The inward was more important than the outward, and it had to come first. That is why Samuel first called Israel to **return with all your hearts**, and then told them to **put away the foreign gods**.

ii. However, inward repentance is a secret thing. It is hidden. No one can really "see" the heart of another. Yet, the inward was proven by the outward. We can know if Israel did **return with all your hearts** by seeing if they really did **put away the foreign gods**. No one could see their heart, but they could see if they **put away the foreign gods**.

c. **And serve Him only:** Israel did not feel they were rejecting the LORD God; they felt they were only adding the worship of other gods to their worship of the LORD. But this

was totally unacceptable; as Jesus said in Mat. 6:24: *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.*

Samuel was calling on Israel to turn their backs on these other gods **and serve Him only.**

i. "A worse enemy than the Philistines held sway over the land . . . the people were thus in double bondage; the heavy yoke of the Philistines was upon them, because the heavier burden of a false worship crushed out the life of their hearts." (Spurgeon) d. **So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the**

**LORD only:** The local gods of *Baal* and *Ashtoreth* were popular idols among the people of Israel. *Baal* was attractive because he was thought to be the god of weather, and could bring good crops and financial success.

*Ashtoreth* was attractive because she was thought to be the goddess of love and sex.

i. "Ashtoreth was worshipped over a wide area as the goddess of fertility, love and war, and plaques of naked female figures from the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine are numerous. The *Baals* were the corresponding male deities." (<Baldwin. htm>)

ii. "Baal, god of fertility and the storm, was believed to be the son of Dagon, god of grain. Ashtoreth, goddess of love and fertility, vied for supremacy with Asherah, mother-goddess and consort of El . . . The association of Baal, Asherah, and Ashtoreth with fertility, particularly as expressed in depraved sexual ritual at Canaanite shrines, made them especially abominable in the Lord's eyes." (Youngblood)

iii. Samuel didn't ask the nation to just take the good from Ashtoreth and Baal and throw away the rest; he called them to renounce these rival gods completely. At this time in their history, Israel did this.

2. (5-6) The nation repents at Mizpah.

And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

a. **Gather all Israel to Mizpah:** This was the place where Jacob separated from Laban (Gen.

31:49), and was the gathering place for a repentant Israel in Jdg. 20:1. This was a place remembered for separation and repentance.

b. **I will pray to the LORD for you:** Samuel had already called the nation to repentance, and they had made a beginning to it. Samuel knew the work God was doing in them could only be completed through prayer.

c. **So they gathered together at Mizpah:** This showed the *spiritual* need Israel felt at the time. They did well to express their repentance both with the desire to put away the bad, and to pursue the good.

i. The *experience* of conviction of sin proves nothing. It is our response to that conviction that demonstrates repentance. Israel responded by both putting away the bad and going after the good.

c. They **drew water, and poured it out**

**before the LORD:** A ceremonial pouring of water, in this context, was a demonstration of having one's soul poured out before the LORD.

It was an expression of emptiness and need.

i. The Chaldean translation of this passage

gives this sense well: "They poured out their heart like water in penance before the Lord."

Pouring out water could express "pouring out the heart in penitence as if it were

water; or as a symbolical act expressing their ruin and helplessness." (Cook)

ii. "They seemed to say in effect, We could wish to shed as many tears for our sins as

there are drops of water in this bucket; but because we cannot do this, behold, we do

what we can." (Trapp)

iii. They were expressing the same heart as

Lam. 2:19: *Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.*

d. **And they fasted that day, and said**

**there, "We have sinned against the**

**LORD."** Israel also expressed their sorrow over their sin by *fasting* (a message that nothing else really mattered except getting right with God), and by *confession* (a straightforward claim of guilt and responsibility).

i. You don't have to go to a confessional to confess your sin. When you are baptized, you are confessing your sin by saying you needed to be cleansed and reborn. When you receive communion, you confess your sin by saying you need the work of Jesus on the cross to take your sin away. But of

course, we need to confess our sin in the most straightforward way: by admitting to God that we have done is *sin*, and asking for His divine forgiveness, based on what Jesus has done on the cross for us.

ii. Our sins are not forgiven *because* we confess; if this were the case - if forgiveness for a sin could only come where there was confession - then we would all be damned,

because it would be impossible for us to confess every sin we ever commit. We are forgiven because our punishment was put upon Jesus, His blood cleanses us.

iii. However, confession is still vital to maintain *relationship* with God. Someone might ask, "If I am always falling short of God's perfect standard, what do I know I need to confess and what do I not worry about?" The answer is simple: confess every sin God tells you to confess. As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.

iv. As it was with Israel, confession must be *personal*; saying "God, if we have made any mistakes, forgive us" isn't confession, because it isn't *convinced* (saying "if we made"), it isn't *personal* (saying "if we made"), it isn't *specific* (saying "if we made *any*"), and it isn't *honest* (saying "mistakes").

v. If it is meant from the heart, it is hard to make a better statement of confession than

**"We have sinned against the LORD."**

This is almost exactly what David said when confronted with his sin in 2Sa. 12:13.

**e. And Samuel judged the children of**

**Israel:** Samuel was the last judge, and was a judge over Israel as were the leaders of the book of Judges. But his leadership was more spiritual than military.

B. Samuel leads the nation to victory.

1. (7) The Philistine threat.

Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

And when the children of Israel heard *of it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

a. **When the Philistines heard:** The Philistines should have been afraid of a repentant, God-seeking Israel, because with God fighting for them, Israel was invincible.

i. However, it is probably too much to credit the Philistines with this kind of spiritual understanding. More likely, their strategy was like Arab plan in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The idea was to catch them praying, hoping they would be off-guard.

ii. As well, when the Philistines looked at a humble, low, repentant Israel, they probably thought they saw *weakness*. They may have been saying, "Look at those weakling Israelites. They are such wimps, crying out

before their God like this." But the Philistines were dead wrong on that account!

iii. Only if every spiritual attack could find us humble and repentant before the LORD, trusting in the atoning work of Jesus, and crying out to the LORD!

b. **When the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines:** The Israelites didn't have much more spiritual understanding than the Philistines! They should have been more confident in the LORD than they were here.

i. Our feelings of confidence can be very deceptive. In 1Sa. 4:5, Israel was completely confident against the Philistines when the ark came into the army camp. But their confidence was false, and they were soon defeated. Here, Israel is fearful and sure of defeat, they have no confidence at all. But they are humble and repentant before the

LORD, and will see a great victory. Often, we can't go by how we feel (good *or* bad), we just need to humbly do what is right before God and trust Him for the victory.

ii. Israel seemed to have more faith when they were trusting in the ark than when they were humble and repentant before the LORD. But small faith in the true and living God is more powerful than the strongest faith in a lie.

2. (8-9) Samuel prays for the nation.

So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered *it as* a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

a. **Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us:** The last time Israel was in this kind of situation they said, "Let's get the Ark of the Covenant and take it into battle with us.

Then we can't lose!" Now, they are much wiser before the LORD, and instead of trusting in the ark, they do the right thing and ask Samuel to **cry out to the LORD our God for us.**

i. Notice the contrast between **that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines** and *Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies* (1Sa. 4:3). Instead of looking to the ark, now they are looking to the LORD.

ii. The humble state of Israel's heart is shown by they did not feel worthy to come to the LORD themselves (**Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us**).



"We are ashamed and afraid to look God in the face, because of our great wickedness this day remembered and acknowledged; do thou therefore intercede for us, as Moses did for his generation." (Poole)

**b. Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as whole burnt offering to the LORD.**

**Then Samuel cried out:** Why did Samuel take time for a sacrifice at such a critical time?

Because he knew he could only effectively pray in light of God's atoning sacrifice

i. Think of that poor lamb - **a suckling**

**lamb** - who had never hurt anyone or who had never sinned itself, had its throat slit, its blood poured out, its body cut up, and its carcass burned. Why? Because Samuel and Israel were saying, "This is what we deserve. This is the punishment that should come upon us. We thank you God, for accepting the punishment of this innocent lamb instead." When we trust in *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (Joh. 1:29), we are saying the same thing.

ii. "A figure of that Lamb undefiled and without spot, Jesus Christ, by whom we prevail over all our spiritual enemies, as here Israel did over the Philistines." (Trapp) iii. When we pray in light of God's atoning sacrifice, we are then ready to cry out to the LORD. We are coming to God because of what He has done for us, instead of what we think we have done for Him.

**c. And the LORD answered him:** The battle has not yet been fought, a hostile Philistine army is approaching. Yet, in a real way, the battle is over and won, because **the LORD answered him.**

i. The Bible speaks of Samuel as a mighty man of prayer: *Samuel was among those*

*who called upon His name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them. (Psa.*

*99:6)*

3. (10-12) The LORD fights for Israel.

Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set *it* up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

a. **The LORD thundered with a loud**

**thunder:** God fought from heaven on behalf of Israel, and sent the Philistines to defeat. But this was a special work of God. After all, the Israelites heard the same thunder, but only the Philistines became **so confused . . . that they were overcome**. God not only send thunder, He sent confusion to the Philistines and confidence to Israel.

i. It is also significant to understand that

Baal was thought to be the god of weather, and was sometimes pictured with a

thunderbolt in his hand. When Israel put away their worship of Baal (1Sa. 7:4), it was as if God said, "I'll show you who the real God of thunder is."

ii. This was the kind of victory Israel was hoping for in 1 Samuel 4, when they brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle. If they would have only repented and sought the LORD as they are doing here, they could have had this kind of victory long ago.

b. **Called its name Ebenezer, saying "Thus far the LORD has helped us."** Samuel knew the nation needed to remember this amazing victory, which came to a humble and repentant Israel. This battle was won by the LORD, not

by Israel, so he named the stone **Ebenezer**, which means "stone of help."

c. **"Thus far the LORD has helped us."**

Samuel knew the LORD had done a great work; yet he knew there was much more to be accomplished. So, he knew it was not finished, yet he could say, **"Thus far the LORD has helped us."** God helps us **thus far** at a time, and His past work is a pledge of future help.

i. **Thus far the LORD has helped us** can either mean "to this point in time" or "to this geographical place." Probably both are in mind; Hebrew writers loved to use double meanings.

ii. The place was important, because some 20 years before, the nation had suffered a terrible defeat and had surrendered the Ark of the Covenant at the same place (1Sa. 4:1). Now, the place could be remembered for something great, instead of something terrible.

4. (13-14) The success of Samuel as a judge over Israel.

So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

a. **The hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel . . . the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel:** Samuel was not a military man, but he was just as successful, or more successful, than Israel's best generals, because the LORD fought for Samuel.

i. Compare Samuel - a humble, spiritually

mindful judge - to Samson, who was a compromising, carnal judge. Samuel seemed so much weaker, and Samson seemed so much stronger, but who was more effective in leading Israel into victory over their enemies?

b. **Also there was peace between Israel**

**and the Amorites:** Samuel was successful not only as a man of war, but also as a man of peace.

5. (15-17) Samuel's service as a circuit judge.

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

a. Samuel was used of God all his days:

**Samuel judged Israel all the days of his**

**life.** Some judges ended their ministry early or in disgrace, but Samuel finished well.

i. "For though Saul was king in Samuel's last days, yet Samuel did not then quite cease to be a judge, being so made by God's extraordinary call, which Saul could not destroy; and therefore Samuel did sometimes, upon great occasions, though not ordinarily, exercise the office of a judge after the beginning of Saul's reign; as chapter 11:7; 15:32,33." (Poole)

b. Samuel worked hard in his service of the

LORD: **He went from year to year on a**

**circuit . . . and judged Israel in all those places.** Every year, Samuel worked hard to go all about Israel to help settle disputes and to promote righteousness.

c. Samuel remained faithful to the LORD: **He always returned to Ramah . . . and there he built an altar to the LORD.** An altar was a place of sacrifice and worship,

and Samuel had a consistent relationship with the LORD in sacrifice and worship.

i. " *Objection*. It was unlawful to build another altar for sacrifice besides that before the tabernacle, Deu. 12:5, 13.

*Answer*. This was in part excused by the confusion of those times, wherein the tabernacle and its

altar were destroyed, as is most probable;

but most fully, because this was done by

prophetical inspiration, and Divine

dispensation, as appears by God's

approbation and acceptance of the sacrifices

offered upon it." (Poole)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** It was quite a long time – some twenty

years in all – that the ark stayed at Kiriath Jearim. All the people of Israel longed for the LORD. **3** Samuel said to all

the people of Israel, "If you are really turning to the LORD with all your hearts, remove from among you the foreign

gods and the images of Ashtoreth. Give your hearts to the LORD and serve only him. Then he will deliver you from the

hand of the Philistines." **4** So the Israelites removed the Baals and images of Ashtoreth. They served only the LORD.

**5** Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD on your behalf." **6** After they had

assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. They fasted on that day, and they

confessed there, "We have sinned against the LORD." So Samuel led the people of Israel at Mizpah.

**7** When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, the leaders of the Philistines went up against Israel. When the Israelites heard about this, they

were afraid of the Philistines. **8** The Israelites said to Samuel, "Keep crying out to the LORD our God so that he may save

us from the hand of the Philistines!" **9** So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the

LORD. Samuel cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him.

**10** As Samuel was offering burnt offerings, the Philistines approached to do battle with Israel. But on that day the LORD thundered loudly against the Philistines. He caused them to panic, and they were defeated by Israel.

**11** Then the men of Israel left Mizpah and chased the Philistines, striking them down all the way to an area below Beth Car.

**12** Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Up to here the LORD has helped us." **13** So the Philistines were defeated; they did not invade Israel again. The hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

**14** The cities that the Philistines had captured from Israel were returned to Israel, from Ekron to Gath. Israel also delivered their territory from the control of the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites. **15** So Samuel led Israel all the days of his life.

**16** Year after year he used to travel the circuit of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; he used to judge Israel in all of these places. **17** Then he would return to Ramah, because his home was there. He also judged Israel there and built an altar to the LORD there.

**1** In his old age Samuel appointed his sons as judges over Israel.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 8:1-22

### ***1 Samuel 8 - Israel Demands a King***

A. The people of Israel request a king.

1. (1-3) Samuel appoints his sons as judges.

Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba.

But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and

perverted justice.

a. **When Samuel was old . . . he made his**

**sons judges over Israel:** Samuel was one of the most godly men in the entire Bible. He is never specifically said to sin. Yet, this may be a sin on his part. We never have the pattern of **judges** being appointed by men, or of the office of judge being passed from father to son.

Samuel was not right in appointing **his sons judges over Israel.**

i. "But they were never *judges* in the proper sense of the word; Samuel was the last judge in Israel, and he judged it to the day

of his death. See 1Sa. 7:15." (Clarke)

b. **His sons did not walk in his ways:** This is why Samuel was wrong to appoint his **sons as judges over Israel.** This kind of nepotism is a common, but harmful mistake many leaders in ministry make, especially as they grow older.

i. Probably, Samuel just could not look objectively at his sons. He would excuse sins in them that he would see more clearly in

others. This is a common mistake people

make with their family, especially with their children.

c. **They turned aside to dishonest gain,**

**took bribes, and perverted justice:** This was bad enough, but what many of our leaders do today seems worse! We almost wish for leaders

"only as bad" as these sons of Samuel!

2. (4-5) Samuel's sons are rejected as leaders over Israel.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him,

"Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

a. **All the elders of Israel gathered:** This was wise for the elders of Israel to do this. They did not have to accept leaders who were obviously ungodly and unfit to lead.

b. While it is was wise for the elders of Israel to reject Samuel's sons as leaders, it was wrong for them to say, **"Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations."**

i. In and of itself, the desire to have a king was not bad. God knew that one day Israel

would have a king. Four hundred years before this, God gave instructions to Israel about their future king (Deu. 17:14-20). A king was in God's plan for Israel.

ii. Yet, the *reason* Israel wanted a king was wrong. **Like all the nations** is no reason at all. We often get into trouble by wanting to be like the world, when we should instead be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). The church struggles with the same issue today, too often wanting to be like the world.

iii. We may also get into trouble when we want the right things for the wrong reasons. In those situations, God may give us what we want, and then deal with us regarding the reasons.

iv. Morgan on Israel's request to be like the other nations: "This is the revelation of the supreme wrong. They had been chosen to be unlike the nations, a people directly governed by God."

c. What was the difference between a **king** and a judge? A judge was a leader raised up by God, usually to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. When the crisis was over, usually the judge just went back to doing what he was doing before. A **king** not only held his office as king as long as he lived; he also passed his throne down to his descendants.

i. In addition, a judge would not have a "government." He was there to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. A king would establish a standing government,



with a bureaucracy, which is both a blessing and a curse to any people.

ii. In Judges 8, Gideon was offered the throne over Israel. He refused it, saying "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you." (Jdg. 8:23) This was the heart of all the judges, and why Israel went some 400 years in the Promised Land without a king.

3. (6-8) Samuel prays about their request and God answers.

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said,

"Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel,

"Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day; with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods; so they are doing to you also."

a. **The thing displeased Samuel:** No doubt, Samuel was stung by the rejection of his sons.

But even more than that, Samuel saw the ungodly motive behind the elders' request for a king.

b. **So Samuel prayed to the LORD:** This is the right thing to do whenever we are **displeased**. We should never carry such troubles with us. Instead, we should do what Samuel did, when he **prayed to the LORD**.

i. "Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased for our own

sakes and God's. We had planned in one direction, but events issued in another; and the results have threatened to become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse them before God - spreading the letter before Him, as Hezekiah did; making request

like Paul; crying like Samuel . . . Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray so little." (Meyer)

c. **Heed the voice of the people:** God told Samuel to fulfill the people's request. This was not because their request was good or right, but because God was going to teach Israel through this. Sometimes, when we insist of having something bad, God will allow us to have it, and then learn the consequences.

i. Again, in many ways, this was a matter of timing. God knew Israel would one day have a king, but He wanted to give Israel that king in His own timing. Because Israel was demanding a king out of bad, carnal reasons, God will give them a bad, carnal king. Israel will get what they want, and will hurt because of it!

d. **They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign**

**over them:** God had a purpose in not giving Israel a king up to that point. It was because He did not want them to put an ungodly trust in the king, instead of trusting in the LORD. Now,

Israel is rejecting this plan of God, and declaring that they do not want the LORD God to **reign over them**.

i. In the words **they have not rejected**

**you**, we sense God comforting Samuel. It is as if God is saying "Samuel, don't take it personally. They are not rejecting you, but Me." It is easy for God's servants to take such rejection personally when they should not. Jesus warned His disciples, *he who rejects you rejects Me* (Luk. 10:16). As long as we are not being personally offensive or obnoxious, we shouldn't take such rejection personally.

e. In fact, Israel was forsaking God by asking for a king: **They have forsaken Me . . . so they are doing to you also**. When the elders of Israel asked for a king, they were thinking that better politics or government could meet their needs. But if they had just been faithful to their King in heaven, they would not have needed a king on earth.

i. This strikes us as simply *unfair*. Had not God shown Himself to be a worthy King?

Didn't He demonstrate His ability to lead the nation, and demonstrate it over and over again?

ii. There is a sense in which their rejection of God as their king is prophetic. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the assembled Jewish mob declared, *we have no king but Caesar* (Joh. 19:15). Jesus was a rejected King also.

4. (9) God tells Samuel to warn the nation.

"Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

a. **You shall solemnly forewarn them**: The sense in this verse is that Israel will not change their mind, and this isn't Samuel's goal. His goal is to simply **forewarn them**. If this

was the course Israel would choose, God wanted them to make an informed choice. So, the LORD tells Samuel to **show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.**

b. Of course, information creates responsibility.

In telling Israel this, Samuel was not only helping them to make an informed choice; he was increasing their accountability for making the right choice. They couldn't say, "We didn't know."

B. Samuel speaks to the people of Israel about their desire for a king.

1. (10-18) Samuel warns the nation of the responsibilities of having a king.

So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said,

"This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots.

He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

a. **This will be the behavior of the king**

**who will reign over you:** God wanted Israel to know there would be problems connected with having a king. In Israel's view, they had problems that would be solved by having a king.

While those problems may have been solved, God wanted them to know a king would bring other problems also. They should carefully weigh the benefits against the problems.

i. Many people fail to do this properly today.

When a problem come up, they think up an answer that brings worse problems with it.

But they don't maturely look at the situation and anticipate the problems the solution will bring. Others will never do anything unless they can come up with a "perfect" solution - one that has no problems. There rarely is a perfect solution, but that doesn't mean we should do nothing. It means we should maturely look at, and measure the good and the bad, pray for guidance, wait on the LORD, and step out in faith.

b. **He will take . . . He will take . . . he will take . . .**

**He will take . . . he will take . . .**

**He will take . . . And you will be his**

**servants:** The LORD, through the prophet Samuel, is giving fair warning. Most kings are takers, not givers, and they come to be served, not to serve. If Israel wants a king, they must realize he will be a taker, not a giver, and they **will be his servants**.

i. Not every king is a "taking" king. The King of Kings is a giving king. Jesus said of

Himself, *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve* (Mat. 20:28). Paul carried the same thought: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being*

*found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became*

*obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Phi. 2:5-8)*

ii. 1Pe. 2:9 calls us *a royal priesthood*. If we are royalty, let us be like our King Jesus: a giving King, not a taking king.

c. **And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen:** Why would Israel **cry out**? Because they wanted a king for unspiritual, ungodly reasons. So God will call this coming king **your king**, and make it clear that he is the king **whom you have chosen**. If Israel had waited for God's king, they would not have needed to **cry out** unto the LORD.

2. (19-22) Israel demands a king despite God's warning.

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."

a. **No, but we will have a king over us:** Israel demanded a king, and as it will work out, this is exactly what happens. God gives Israel "their" king: Saul. Later, after "their" king fails, God will give Israel "His" king: David. Because we know God ultimately wanted Israel to be a monarchy, we might even guess that if Israel

had not forsaken the LORD here, God would have made David the first king of Israel, and spared the nation (and David!) all the trouble Saul caused.

b. The heart of the nation of Israel is revealed by their reasons for wanting a king.

i. **That we also may be like all the**

**nations.** God never wanted this to be the goal for Israel. God wanted to make them *a special treasure to Me above all people . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Exo. 19:6). God wanted to make Israel something special, and they wanted to be just like everyone else! Poole says of this, "woeful stupidity! whereas it was their glory and happiness that they were unlike all other nations . . . that the Lord was their only and immediate King and Lawgiver."

ii. **And that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.**

What? Had the LORD God never won a battle for Israel before? God had just won a spectacular battle for Israel in 1 Samuel 7. Israel did not want a king. They had a king in the LORD God. What they wanted was the *image* of a king. Their desire for a king was really the desire for someone to look at with their own eyes that *looked like* what they thought a king should look like.

c. **So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."** In a sense, this almost funny. They are rejecting the rule of God, yet they cannot escape it, because God will appoint their king. God will never step off His throne, even if man asks Him to. Yet, if we resist the rule of God, we will find that we do not benefit from it the way that we might. When we resist God, we only hurt ourselves!

i. "There is no compulsion to accept the rule of God, yet ultimately there is no escaping it, for he appoints the king." (Baldwin) © 2001 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second son was Abijah. They were judges in Beer Sheba. **3** But his sons did not follow his ways. Instead, they made money dishonestly, accepted bribes, and perverted justice.

**4** So all the elders of Israel gathered together and approached Samuel at Ramah. **5** They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons don't follow your ways. So now appoint over us a king to lead us, just like all the other nations have."

**6** But this request displeased Samuel, for they said, "Give us a king to lead us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

**7** The LORD said to Samuel, "Do everything the people request of you. For it is not you that they have rejected, but it is me that they have rejected as their king.

**8** Just as they have done from the day that I brought them up from Egypt until this very day, they have rejected me and have served other gods. This is what they are also doing to you. **9** So now do as they say. But seriously warn them and make them aware of the policies of the king who will rule over them."

**10** So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. **11** He said, "Here are the policies of the king who will rule over you: He will conscript your sons and put them in his chariot forces and in his cavalry; they will run in front of his chariot. **12** He will appoint for himself leaders of thousands and leaders of fifties, as well as those who plow his ground, reap his harvest, and make his weapons of war and his chariot equipment. **13** He will take your daughters to be ointment makers, cooks, and bakers. **14** He will take your best fields and vineyards and give them to his own servants. **15** He will demand a tenth of your seed and of the produce of your vineyards and give it to his administrators and his servants. **16** He will take your male and female servants, as well as your best cattle and your donkeys, and assign them for his own use. **17** He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will be his servants. **18** In that day you will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD won't answer you in that day."

**19** But the people refused to heed Samuel's warning.



Instead they said, “No! There will be a king over us! **20** We will be like all the other nations. Our king will judge us and lead us and fight our battles.”

**21** So Samuel listened to everything the people said and then reported it to the LORD. **22** The LORD said to Samuel, “Do as they say and install a king over them.”

Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Each of you go back to his own city.”

**1** There was a Benjaminite man named Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. He was a prominent person.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 9:1-27

### ***1 Samuel 9 - God Leads Saul to Samuel***

A. Saul searches for his father's donkeys.

1. (1-2) Kish, the father of Saul, and his son Saul.

There was a man of Benjamin whose name *was* Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and

handsome son whose name *was* Saul. *There was* not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward *he was* taller than any of the people.

a. **A mighty man of power:** Kish, the father of Saul, was a wealthy and influential man in Israel. Saul came from a prestigious family, and was born to wealth and influence.

b. **A choice and handsome young man:** Saul was notable, not only for his family, but also for his appearance. Saul was tall (**taller than any of his people**) and good looking. In fact, there **was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel**. Saul *looked* like a great king. If being king over Israel was all about image and appearances, Saul was the man.

i. In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel had just rejected the LORD God as king over Israel, because they wanted a king like all the surrounding nations had. What they

really wanted was the *image* of a king, because God gave them the *substance* of a king better than any man could. Saul was exactly the type of king that the people wanted. He was the king from central casting. God is giving Israel the kind of leaders they wanted and deserved!

ii. The name **Saul** means "asked of God."

Israel was asking for a king, and Saul would indeed be the one "asked of God."

c. What is not mentioned in these first two verses is God. Saul came from a wealthy, influential family and was good looking. But there is nothing said about his relationship with the LORD God of Israel. There is nothing said because there was nothing to say!

i. Saul reflected the spiritual state of the whole nation of Israel. There may have been some spiritual image present, but the heart was far from where God wanted it to be.

d. **From his shoulders upward he was**

**taller than any of the people** does not mean Saul had an extremely long neck and head. It means he was "head and shoulders" taller than just about anyone else.

2. (3-14) Saul and his servant search for his father's donkeys and meet Samuel the prophet.

Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost.

And Kish said to his son Saul, "Please, take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys."

So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find *them*.

Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and *they were not there*. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find *them*.

When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul

said to his servant who *was* with him, "Come, let us return, lest my father cease *caring* about the donkeys and become

worried about us." And he said to him, "Look now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go." Then Saul said to his servant, "But look, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and *there is* no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?" And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand one fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give *that* to the man of God, to tell us our way." (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for *he who is* now *called* a prophet was formerly called a seer.) Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God *was*. As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?"

And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place. As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him." So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

**a. Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost:**

Look at how God opens one of the most important chapters of Israel's history! A king will be led to the throne by three lost donkeys! We have no idea how God will use the seemingly normal - and annoying - circumstances of life.

i. There are two mistakes people make regarding God's guidance through

circumstances. One mistake is to think *every* event of our lives is heavy with meaning from God. This is wrong, because though

nothing happens by accident, not everything

happens for a great purpose. The second

mistake is to *ignore* the moving of God in our lives through circumstances. God wanted to use this situation to guide Saul, and God

will often use circumstances in our lives the same way. We need to trust in God's

goodness and in His ability to make *all*

*things work together for good* (Rom. 8:28).

**b. They did not find them . . . they were**

**not there . . . did not find them:** This was frustrating to Saul. Yet, God was working out His plan through the lost donkeys, in a way Saul couldn't even imagine.

i. Those donkeys could have gone anywhere.

But they went exactly where God wanted

them to go. They submitted themselves to

what God wanted them to do. We often

speak of "dumb animals," but these donkeys were smart enough to submit to God. Are

we that smart?

ii. Saul had no idea he was being guided by

God, but he was. The same is true in our

lives. God has a plan and a purpose for you

right where you are at, and you should

submit to God and get in with His plan. "It is important for us to learn that the smallest

trifles are as much arranged by the God of

providence as the most startling events. He

who counts the stars has also numbered the

hairs of our heads." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Saul went out to seek his father's asses, he failed in the search, but he found a

crown." (Spurgeon)

c. **Look now, there is in this city a man of God . . . perhaps he can show us the way we should go:**

The suggestion of Saul's servant shows something about these two men.

They weren't men of much spiritual character!

They seem to be men who wouldn't think to come to the prophet Samuel for real spiritual guidance, but they do think, "Hey! Maybe he can help us find the donkeys!"

i. Yet, their words are a great credit to Samuel. His reputation was well known: **A man of God . . . an honorable man . . . all that he says surely comes to pass.**

What do people think about you? When they are looking for a man or a woman of God, would anyone ever come your way?

d. **There is no present to bring the man of God:** Out of respect for the prophet Samuel, Saul did not want to approach the prophet of God empty handed. But it is wrong to think that Samuel had some type of fee for his "prophetic services." Samuel was a great prophet of the living God, not a fortune-teller.

i. "The word *seer*, *roeh*, occurs for the first time in this place; it literally signifies a *person who SEES*; particularly *preternatural* sights. A *seer* and a *prophet* were the same in most cases; only with this difference, the seer was always a *prophet*, but the prophet was not always a *seer*." (Clarke) ii. "When consulting a prophet, it was common courtesy to bring a gift (Amo.

7:12), whether modest (1Ki. 14:3) or lavish (2Ki. 8:8-9)." (Youngblood)

iii. Poole admits that **one fourth of a shekel of silver** is a small gift. But he comments: "in those ancient times it was certainly of far more worth, and better accepted than now it would be, when the covetousness, and pride, and luxury of men

have raised their expectations and desires to far greater things."

**e. Hurry now; for today he came to this**

**city:** It "just happened" that Saul and his servant came looking for their donkeys on the same day Samuel was in town. God is guiding through these circumstances.

i. Jewish legends say that it was because

Saul was so good looking that the **young women** wanted to talk to him.

B. Samuel and Saul meet.

1. (15-17) God tells Samuel that Saul is the man who will be king.

Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander

over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to me." And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people."

**a. Now the LORD had told Samuel in his**

**ear the day before:** Saul has no relationship with the LORD, so all He can do is speak to Saul through lost donkeys. But Samuel knows and loves the LORD, so the LORD can speak to

**Samuel in his ear.**

**i. The LORD had told Samuel in his ear**

is literally, "had uncovered his ear." The same phrase is used in Rth. 4:4. "The

phrase is taken from the pushing aside of the headdress in order to whisper, and therefore means that Jehovah had secretly told Samuel." (Smith, *Pulpit Commentary*) It doesn't mean Samuel heard an audible voice from God.

b. **Tomorrow about this time:** God gave the prophet Samuel very specific guidance regarding future events. Samuel received this guidance wisely, and looked for the fulfillment of the words to confirm God's choice of a king.

But Samuel was also wise in not manipulating circumstances to "make" what God had said come to pass. Samuel felt that if this was God's word, He was able to make it happen.

c. **I will send you:** Even though Israel had rejected the LORD God as their king (1Sa. 8:7), God was still in control. He didn't step off His throne just because Israel asked Him to. He would indeed give them a king, but He would send a flawed king to a flawed Israel.

d. **That he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines:** Though there were many problems with the reign of Saul, no one should think it was a total disaster. Saul led Israel to many military victories, and greater independence from the Philistines.

e. **And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him:** The day after God told Samuel about the coming of the new king, God specifically identifies the man to Samuel. God's speaking one day will be confirmed by His speaking another day.

2. (18-21) Samuel and Saul meet.

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where *is* the seer's house?"

And Samuel answered Saul and said, "I *am* the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that *is* in your heart.

"But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on you and on all your father's house?" And Saul answered and said, " *Am I* not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and

my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"

a. **You shall eat with me today:** All this must have seemed amazing to Saul. He is looking for a noted prophet, and the first man he asks is the prophet. Then, the man of God invites Saul to dinner. Finally, he hears the words many fear to hear from a prophet: **tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.**

b. At the same time, Samuel proved to Saul that he was a true prophet from God. He did this by showing Saul he knew things that he probably could not have known unless it was revealed to him supernaturally (**But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago . . .** ).

c. **On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you?** With this, Samuel hints at Saul's destiny. All of Israel desired a king, and Saul would be the answer to that desire.

i. "Saul understood this as implying that he was chosen to be king." (Clarke)

d. **Why then do you speak like this to me?**

This was a genuinely humble response from Saul, even if it wasn't completely honest. Saul could not figure out why the prophet would say God wanted *him* to be king.

i. Saul's statement **and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin** is more an example of his modesty than his truthfulness. Saul's father and family were actually prominent men (1Sa. 9:1).

ii. Saul's humility was one reason God chose him to be king. But as he was lifted up as king, his humility left him. So why did God ever raise up Saul? Why does God raise one up to a place of prominence, and not raise up another? We sometimes think it is because one is more spiritual, or more holy,



or better than another is. Or, we think that it is because one is more talented or usable or has more faith than another is. These things may or may not be the case. God has raised up many to prominence who were less deserving than others. Probably the biggest mistake we can make is to think that we can figure out all of God's reasons for raising one and keeping another low. Many of these reasons are bound up in the unsearchable wisdom of God. What we should never do is assume that just because God is using a man, that he deserves it!

iii. "This speech of Saul is exceedingly *modest*; he was now becomingly humble; but who can bear *elevation* and *prosperity*?" (Clarke)

3. (22-24) Samuel makes certain that Saul receives the seat and portion of honor at the feast.

Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there *were* about thirty persons. And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Set it apart.'"

So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set *it* before Saul. And *Samuel* said, "Here it is, what was kept back. *It* was set apart for you.

Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

a. **Had them sit in the place of honor:** In that culture, any dinner had a special seating protocol. The seat of honor was always on a particular side next to the host. It was a great honor to be seated in this place next to the prophet Samuel.

b. **It was set apart for you:** Saul was also given the special portion. In that culture, every meal had a special

portion that would be given to the one the host wanted to honor. Saul was specially honored at this meal.

i. We might imagine that Samuel was very interested to see how Saul would react when he was honored this way. Often, the way one reacts when they are honored shows what kind of person they really are. If they receive the honor humbly, without regarding it too much or becoming proud about it, it says something good about them. But if they show a false humility or a proud heart in the way they receive the honor, it shows something bad in their character.

c. Clarke makes an interesting, though doubtful point: "Why was the *shoulder* set before Saul? Not because it was the *best part*, but because it was the emblem of the *government* to which he was now called.

See Isa. 9:6: *And the government shall be upon his SHOULDER.*"

4. (25-27) Samuel and Saul talk together through the night. When they had come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* spoke with Saul on the top of the house. They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, "Get up, that I may send you on your way." And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel. As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." And he went on. "But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God."

a. **Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house:** How we wish we could have

listened to this conversation! No doubt, Samuel told Saul all about Israel's desire for a king, and how he had to be a good king for Israel.

i. We can just imagine Samuel saying: "Look Saul, you have a lot going for you. You have the image, you are a humble man, and you will have the support of the people. But if you don't give your heart to serving God, and submit to Him as your king, you will never be a fit king for Israel."

ii. Queen Victoria reigned over Great Britain for 64 years. But when she was 11 years old, her governess showed her a list of the kings and queens of England with her name added at the end. When she understood what it meant, she burst into tears. Then she controlled herself and said solemnly, "I will be good." Here, Samuel gave Saul the opportunity to say with his heart, "I will be good."

**b. That I may announce to you the word of**

**God:** Samuel dramatically introduces the official anointing as king he will give to Saul.

i. Through an amazing set of circumstances, God had brought Saul to this place. Some people see God move in such remarkable ways, and think, "If God moves in such remarkable ways, I can just sit back and if God wants to reach me, He will arrange it and force Himself on me." No. Though God may deal in special ways with certain people, He has commanded us to seek Him with all our hearts.

ii. "Suppose, now, it were known that the events of a certain battle would depend entirely on the skill of the general. The two armies are equally balanced, and everything must depend on the tact of the commander; would the soldiers therefore conclude that they needed not to load, or fire, or draw a

sword, because everything depended on the commander? No, but the commander works, and his soldiery work together with him. So it is with us. Everything depends on God, but we are his instruments." (Spurgeon)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He had a son named Saul, a handsome young man.

There was no one among the Israelites more handsome than he was; he stood head and shoulders above all the people.

**3** The donkeys of Saul's father Kish wandered off, so Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go look for the donkeys." **4** So Saul crossed through the hill country of Ephraim, passing through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. So they crossed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he crossed through the land of Benjamin, and still they did not find them. **5** When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come on, let's head back before my father quits worrying about the donkeys and becomes anxious about us!" **6** But the servant said to him, "Look, there is a man of God in this town. He is highly respected. Everything that he says really happens. Now let's go there. Perhaps he will tell us where we should go from here." **7** So Saul said to his servant, "All right, we can go. But what can we bring the man, since the food in our bags is used up? We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?" **8** The servant went on to answer Saul, "Look, I happen to have in my hand a quarter shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God and he will tell us where we should go." **9**

(Now it used to be in Israel that whenever someone went to inquire of God he would say, "Come on, let's go to the seer." For today's prophet used to be called a seer.) **10** So Saul said to his servant, "That's a good idea! Come on.

Let's go." So they went to the town where the man of God was.

**11** As they were going up the ascent to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water. They said to them, "Is this where the seer is?" **12** They replied, "Yes, straight ahead! But hurry now, for he came to the town today, and the people are making a sacrifice at the high place. **13** When you enter the town, you can find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people won't eat until he arrives, for he must bless the sacrifice.

Once that happens, those who have been invited will eat.

Now go on up, for this is the time when you can find him!"

**14** So they went up to the town. As they were heading for the middle of the town, Samuel was coming in their direction to go up to the high place. **15** Now the day before Saul arrived, the LORD had told Samuel: **16** "At this time tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin. You must consecrate him as a leader over my people Israel. He will save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked with favor on my people.

Their cry has reached me!"

**17** When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said, "Here is the man that I told you about! He will rule over my people."

**18** As Saul approached Samuel in the middle of the gate, he said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."

**19** Samuel replied to Saul, "I am the seer! Go up in front of me to the high place! Today you will eat with me and in the morning I will send you away. I will tell you everything that you are thinking. **20** Don't be concerned about the donkeys that you lost three days ago, for they have been found. Whom does all Israel desire? Is it not you, and all your father's family?"

**21** Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the smallest of Israel's tribes, and is not my family clan the smallest of all the tribes of Benjamin? Why do you speak to me in this way?"

**22** Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the room and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited. There were about thirty people present. **23**

Samuel said to the cook, "Give me the portion of meat that I gave to you – the one I asked you to keep with you."

**24** So the cook picked up the leg and brought it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "What was kept is now set before you! Eat, for it has been kept for you for this meeting time, from the time I said, 'I have invited the people.'" So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

**25** When they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof. **26** They got up at dawn and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get up, so I can send you on your way." So Saul got up and the two of them – he and Samuel – went outside. **27** While they were going down to the edge of town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." So he did.

Samuel then said, "You remain here awhile, so I can inform you of God's message."

**1** Then Samuel took a small container of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head. Samuel kissed him and said, "The LORD has chosen you to lead his people Israel! You will rule over the LORD's people and you will deliver them from the power of the enemies who surround them. This will be your sign that the LORD has chosen you as leader over his inheritance. Guzik - 1 Samuel 10:1-27

### ***1 Samuel 10 - Saul Anointed and Proclaimed King***

A. Saul is anointed as king over Israel.

1. (1) Samuel anoints Saul.

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured *it* on his head, and kissed him and said: " *Is it* not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?"

a. **Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head:** This was a literal *anointing* of Saul. The word "anoint" means *to rub or sprinkle on; apply an unguent, ointment, or*

*oily liquid to*. When Samuel **poured it on his head**, Saul was **anointed** with oil.

i. But the *idea* of anointing is much bigger.

What happened to Saul's head and body was simply a picture of what God was doing in him spiritually. The Holy Spirit was being poured out on him, equipping him for the job of being king over Israel.

ii. Priests were anointed for their special service to the LORD (Exo. 28:41). Literal oil would be applied, but as a sign of the Holy Spirit upon their lives and service. The oil on the head was only the outward representation of the real, spiritual work going on inside them.

iii. Sometimes anointing oil would be poured (Exo. 29:7), sometimes it would be sprinkled (Exo. 29:21). This shows that the Holy Spirit's equipping for service is poured out in different ways and in different measures at different times and on different persons.

iv. Exo. 30:22-33 tells us about the special anointing oil. It was regarded as a sacred compound that could not be imitated nor used as normal perfuming oil. Since oil is emblematic of the Holy Spirit, we see that the Holy Spirit is not poured out to enhance our flesh, but to glorify Himself. Exo. 30:32 says specifically: *it shall not be poured on man's flesh*. Also, the work of the Holy Spirit is never to be imitated: *nor shall you make any other like it . . . it is holy, and it shall be holy to you* (Exo. 30:32). There is to be no place for encouraging a fleshly imitation of the gifts or operations of the Holy Spirit; this denies the holiness of the Holy Spirit, regarding His work as something we can do just as well on our own.

v. "In 1988 archaeologists uncovered in the bottom of a three-foot-deep pit near Qumran, at the northwestern end of the Dead Sea, a five-inch-diameter clay flask wrapped in a nest of palm fibers and containing a small amount of well-preserved reddish oil, probably distilled from balsam. Dating from the first century A.D., the oil may be the only surviving sample of its kind and may be similar to that used to anoint ancient Israelite kings." (Youngblood)

vi. As Christians under the New Covenant, we also have an anointing: *But you have an anointing from the Holy One* (1Jo. 2:20). In the New Testament sense, *anointing* has the idea of being filled with, and blessed by, the Holy Spirit. This is something that is the common property of *all* Christians, but something we can and should become more submitted and responsive to. "As *oil* was used among the Asiatics for the inauguration of persons in important offices, and this oil was acknowledged to be an emblem of the *gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit*, without which the duties of those offices could not be discharged; so it is put here for the Spirit himself, who presided in the Church, and from which all gifts and graces flowed." (Clarke)

b. **And kissed him:** This was not only a greeting, but it was a sign of Samuel's personal support of Saul. It was important that the first king of Israel feel the support of the man of God.

c. **Is it not because of the LORD has anointed you:** God had anointed Saul, and there were many aspects to this anointing which were especially memorable to Saul.

i. It was a *secret* anointing, because it was not yet the time to reveal Saul as king to the nation. As Christians, our



anointing often comes in just such a private way, not in a flashy, public ceremony.

ii. It was a *memorable* and *evident* anointing, because Saul's head was drenched with oil. Psalms 133:2 describes how messy an anointing could be: *It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down the beard . . . running down on the edge of his garments.* As Christians, our filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit should be memorable and evident. Saul could look

back on this day, and this event, and know that God had called him to something special as the king of Israel.

iii. It was a *prophetic* anointing, because just as Saul was anointed as king, so Jesus is anointed as the King of Kings. Jesus is the *Messiah* (the same word as "Christ"), which means *Anointed One*.

#### d. **Commander over His inheritance:**

Samuel reminds Saul that Israel belongs to the LORD, they are **His inheritance**. At the same time, Saul has an important job to do, because God has placed him as **commander over His inheritance**. Saul should have tried to be the best king he could be, because he was taking care of a people who belonged to the LORD God.

i. Poole on **His inheritance**: "Whereby he admonisheth Saul that this people were not so much his as God's; and that he was not to rule and manage them according to his own will and pleasure, but according to the will and mind of God."

2. (2) Samuel tells Saul of a sign to confirm what God has done.

"When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the

territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" ' "

a. **You will find two men by Rachel's tomb:** Samuel gives Saul a specific, prophetic word from God, by which Saul can have confidence

that his anointing by Samuel was really from

God. If there were no men **by Rachel's tomb**, or if there was only one man and not **two**, then Saul should know that Samuel was not really speaking from God.

i. However, speaking purely theoretically,

there could have been *three men* **by Rachel's tomb** and the prophecy could have been still exactly correct. You can say

there are **two men** if there are three or four or five; but you cannot say there are **two men** if there is only one. When a word is from God, it is always fulfilled exactly as God says, but not always exactly as we were expecting it.

b. **They will say to you:** If the men by **Rachel's tomb** do not tell Saul about the finding of the lost donkeys, Saul will know Samuel is not a true prophet. God gave Saul this sign to make him confident in what the LORD was doing.

i. We need to trust in God's *confirmation* along the way. God did not want Saul to doubt his calling later, so he gave him a lot of confirmation.

3. (3-4) Samuel tells Saul of another sign to confirm what God has done.

"Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. And they will greet you and give you two *loaves* of bread, which you shall receive from their hands."

a. **The terebinth tree of Tabor . . . three men . . . three young goats . . . three loaves of bread . . . a skin of wine . . . they will greet you and give you.**

Again, Samuel is giving Saul such specific predictions that they can be exactly verified. God may have a place for vague, broad words (such as saying to an audience of five hundred people, "There is someone here with a headache . . ."), but they are not remarkable evidence of prophecy.

b. **Which you shall receive:** It would be unusual for men to simply give a stranger like Saul **loaves of bread**. But as king, Saul will be often receiving gifts, so this was a good way to speak to confirm to him his position as king.

i. Wasn't **two loaves of bread** a strange present? "The more strange the present was, the more fit it was for a sign of God's

extraordinary providence in Saul's affairs." (Poole)

4. (5-7) Samuel tells Saul of a third sign to confirm what God has done.

"After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison *is*. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs come to you, *that* you do as the occasion demands; for God *is* with you."

a. **A group of prophets:** These prophets were apparently seeking the LORD and worshipping Him at the place of worship (**the high place**).

**They will be prophesying** isn't necessarily that they were all predicting the future, but that they were all speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

i. Prophets may speak by the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit, yet their words may not be predicting the future. 1Co. 14:3 says, *he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men*. Also, people may speak to God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

ii. Poole on **a group of prophets**: "He understands persons that did wholly devote themselves to religious studies and exercises, such as preaching, praying, praising of God."

iii. "Members of prophetic bands were often young (2Ki. 5:22; 9:4); they frequently lived together (2Ki. 6:1-2), ate together (2Ki.

4:38), and were supported by the generosity of their fellow Israelites (2Ki. 4:42-43) . . .

Samuel provided guidance and direction for the movement in its early stages, as Elijah and Elisha did later." (Youngblood)

**b. Then the Spirit of the LORD will come**

**upon you**: This reception of the Holy Spirit was the real anointing. The oil poured out on Saul's head was just a picture of this. A gallon of oil could have been put on his head, but if **the Spirit of the LORD** did not **come upon** him, it would have meant nothing!

i. Poole writes that the literal Hebrew for

**will come upon you** is " *will leap or rush upon thee*, to wit, for a season. So it may be opposed to the *Spirit's resting* upon a man, as in Num. 11:25; Isa. 11:2."

**c. And you will prophesy with them and be**

**turned into another man**: Saul, before this time, never seems to have been a particularly spiritual man. So for him to **prophesy** - that is, speak as inspired from the LORD, whether predicting the future, exhorting others, or speaking unto God - was real evidence that he had been **turned into another man**.

i. God picked Saul just as he was, even though he was not a particularly spiritual

man. Yet, God did not want to leave Saul just as he was. For God to use Saul to the fullest, he had to be **turned into another man** by the filling of **the Spirit of the LORD**.

ii. God says His work will be done, *not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit* (Zec.

4:6). When we let **the Spirit of the LORD** fill us and change us, then we can see the work of God really done.

d. **When these signs come to you:** God arranged for each one of these three events to be a sign to Saul. God *always* confirms His anointing!

5. (8) Saul is commanded to wait for Samuel at Gilgal.

"You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings *and* make sacrifices of peace offerings.

Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do."

a. **Seven days you shall wait:** This is an important command. By the nature of their office, kings do not wait for anybody. Others wait for them. But Samuel commands Saul to

wait for him, because the prophet of God had more real authority than this king over Israel!

Saul had to show that even though he was a king, he was submitted to the LORD, and the LORD's prophet. Failing to **wait** for Samuel will get Saul into trouble on a future occasion.

b. Why **Gilgal**? "Gilgal was chosen for this purpose as a very fit place; partly because that place was famous for the solemn renewing of the covenant between God and Israel, Joshua

4 . . . and partly because it was a very convenient place for the tribes within and without Jordan to assemble, and consult, and unite their forces together upon such

occasions." (Poole)

6. (9-13) The signs come to pass.

So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What is this *that* has come upon the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?"

Then a man from there answered and said, "But who *is* their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: " *Is* Saul also among the prophets?" And when he had finished prophesying, he went to the high place.

a. **When he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart.**

Samuel could not give Saul another heart. Only the Spirit of the LORD could do that. To

demonstrate this, God did not grant this change of heart to Saul until he left the presence of Samuel. God wanted Saul to honor and respect Samuel, but to never look to Samuel in the

place of the LORD.

i. **God gave him another heart:** Samuel did not give it. Saul did not even give it to himself. The new **heart** was a gift from God.

We can have **another heart** from the LORD also, but we must receive it from him. We can't receive a new heart from anyone from God, and we can never make a new heart in anyone else.

b. **Is Saul also among the prophets?** This phrase **became a proverb** describing astonishment that someone

had become a religious fanatic. As some used to say of someone who was not a religious person who became very religious, "He got religion?" Saul was an unspiritual man who became very spiritual at the time when the Spirit of the LORD came upon him.

c. **But who is their father?** This question asks, "Who is the source of the inspiration upon the prophets?" If God is their inspiration, then why should it be strange that God could inspire an unlikely man such as Saul? "Who is the father of all these prophets of whom you speak, and among whom Saul is now one? who is it that instructs and inspires them with this holy art, but God? They have it not from their natural parents . . . but by inspiration from God, who, when he pleaseth, can inspire Saul, or any other man, with the same skill. And therefore wonder not at this matter, but give God the glory of it." (Poole) d. **When he had finished prophesying:** Saul prophesied without ever really being called as a prophet. This shows us that someone can receive prophecy as a gift from the Holy Spirit without really being a "prophet" in the sense of having that office or title.

7. (14-16) Saul hides his experience from his family.

Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" So he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that *they were nowhere to be found*, we went to Samuel." And Saul's uncle said, "Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you." So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said.

a. **Where did you go?** This may have been a simple, logical question. Or, **Saul's uncle** may be asking because he noticed that Saul had very, very oily hair!

b. **About the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him:** Of course, it seems strange that Saul would not tell of

what he had experienced.

Didn't he have a lot to tell about?

i. Perhaps Saul was wise, knowing that the LORD had to reveal him as king over Israel.

What point was there in saying, "I'm the king now!" until the LORD had declared him to be king?

ii. Or, perhaps Saul is just experiencing what many experience after a powerful encounter with the LORD: an attack from the enemy, making us fearful and cowardly to tell others what God has done in our lives.

B. Saul proclaimed as king.

1. (17-19) Samuel's speech to the nation before the appointment of a king.

Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah, and said to the children of

Israel, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians *and* from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.' But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your

adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!' Now

therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

a. **I brought Israel out of Egypt:** Before God appoints a king for Israel, God reminds Israel of all He has done for them. In a sense, God is reminding Israel that He was still more than

qualified to be their king, and their rejection of Him was all because of them, and not because of the LORD.

b. **But you have rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your**

**adversities and your tribulations:** The LORD, speaking through Samuel, is showing Israel how their rejection of Him



made so little sense. Why would anyone reject the one **who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations?**

i. It is easy for us to think, "Wow, those Israelites were really stupid. How foolish to reject God like that!" But are we much different? Whenever we, even in the smallest way, reject God, we show the same lack of sense.

2. (20-21a) Saul is selected by lot.

And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen.

a. **And Saul the son of Kish was chosen:** Why did God do it this way, when He had already anointed Saul as king over Israel?

Because this would show the whole nation that Saul was the right man. It would show that God had chosen Saul, not that any man had chosen him.

i. **They inquired of the LORD:** "Either by Urim or Thummin, which was the usual way of inquiry . . . or by Samuel, who by his prayer procured an answer." (Poole)

ii. "It appears that, in order to find out the proper person who should be made their king, they must determine by lot: 1. The *tribe*. 2. The *thousands* or *grand divisions* by families. 3. The *smaller divisions* by families.

And, 4. The *individual*. When the lot was cast for the *tribe*, Benjamin was taken; when for the *thousand*, the division of Matri was taken; when for the *family*, the family of Kish was taken; when for the *individual*, Saul, the son of Kish, was taken." (Clarke) b. It is important to say that Saul did not become king because he was chosen by lot.

Instead, he was chosen king because of God's word to the prophet Samuel. The choosing by lot simply confirmed the word of the LORD through Samuel.

3. (21b-24) Saul is revealed to be the king. But when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD answered, "There he is, hidden among the equipment." So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that *there is* no one like him among all the people?" So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

a. **Hidden among the equipment:** In fact, here Saul shows a healthy embarrassment and humility. He was not looking forward to being "center stage" in front of the nation; he seems to be dreading it. Saul was not made king because of his own personal ambition, or to gratify a desire for the limelight.

i. Spurgeon, in his sermon *Hiding Among the Stuff*, shows how both believers and unbelievers can be **hidden among the**

**equipment**, avoiding the crown God has for them. "There may be some of you here present, who may be doing precisely what

Saul did, only you are doing it more foolishly than he did. He did but hide away from an earthly crown, but you hide from a heavenly one." (Spurgeon)

b. **He was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward:** The physical description of Saul shows he is exactly what the people wanted. Israel a

king that would look good to the other nations, and God gave them

"the king from central casting"!

c. **Long live the king!** The people of Israel, in their desire for the image and pageantry of a human king had been longing to shout these words for a long time. They knew all the other nations got see royal ceremonies and functions.

Now they get to also!

d. **Do you see him . . . there is no one like him among all the people:** What did Samuel mean by this? Probably, there was a note of sarcasm in his voice when he said this. He

wanted the nation to **see** the king, and according to what they could **see**, he was a great king. But Samuel, from his long conversations with Saul (1Sa. 9:25-26),

probably knew him well enough to mean

something else when he said, **there is no one like him among all the people.**

4. (25-27) The monarchy established.

Then Samuel explained to the people the

behavior of royalty, and wrote *it* in a book and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant *men* went with him, whose hearts God had touched.

But some rebels said, "How can this man save us?" So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

a. **Samuel explained to the people the**

**behavior of royalty:** Samuel taught them God's guidelines for both rulers and subjects, probably using Deu. 17:14-20.

i. When it says **the behavior of royalty**, we can guess that Samuel was not

explaining how a king should hold a teacup.

Instead, Samuel was probably warning them about the wickedness and selfishness kings

have, just as Jesus said: *You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.* But Jesus added this word of instruction: *Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many* (Mar. 10:42-45). According to the way the kings of this world live, God never wants us to imitate **the behavior of royalty.**

b. **Wrote it in a book and laid it up before the LORD:** It doesn't seem that this book Samuel wrote is any of the books of the Bible we have. This doesn't mean that there is something missing from our Bibles, it simply means that God did not want this book preserved in His eternal word.

c. **Saul also went home to Gibeah:** At the time, there was no palace or capital. So, Saul simply walked home with his future leaders, the **valiant men** who **went with him.**

i. God called Saul to be king and lead the nation. Yet, this was not something he could do himself. He needed **valiant men** around him, men **whose hearts God had touched.**

d. **So they despised him . . . But he held his peace:** Not all of Israel was supportive of Saul yet. It was probable that because they had never had a king before, that it was unlikely they could choose any one man the whole nation could get behind. Yet, Saul should be recognized for his wise reaction (**he held his peace**). An insecure or unwise leader, at this point, might feel the need to "crush" anyone that opposed him, or simply regard them as enemies. Saul did neither, understanding that it might take him some time to win over the doubters.

i. "The Hebrew, as suggested by the margin, is still more striking. 'He was as though he had been deaf' - he pretended not to hear. He did hear; every word had struck deep into his soul, but he made as though he were deaf. It is a great power when a man can act as though he were deaf to slander, deaf to detraction, deaf to unkind and uncharitable speeches, and treat them as though they had not been spoken, turning from man to God, leaving with God his vindication, believing God that sooner or later will give him a chance . . . of vindicating the true prowess and temper of his soul." (Meyer)

ii. From this, we see that Saul started out with so much promise. He was chosen and anointed by God. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He had the support of a man of God like Samuel. He had been given gifts appropriate to royalty. He had the enthusiastic support and goodwill of most all the nation. He had **valiant men** around him, men **whose hearts God had**

**touched** to support him. And, he had the wisdom to not regard every doubter, or every critic, as an enemy. But despite all

these great advantages, Saul can still blow it. Will he walk in the advantages God had given him so far, or will he go his own way?

The rest of the book of 1 Samuel gives the answer to that question.

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** When you leave me today, you will find two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on Benjamin's border. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you have gone

looking for have been found. Your father is no longer concerned about the donkeys but has become anxious about you two! He is asking, "What should I do about my son?"

**3** "As you continue on from there, you will come to the tall tree of Tabor. At that point three men who are going up to God at Bethel will meet you. One of them will be carrying three young goats, one of them will be carrying three round loaves of bread, and one of them will be carrying a container of wine. **4** They will ask you how you're doing and will give you two loaves of bread. You will accept them. **5** Afterward you will go to Gibeah of God, where there are Philistine officials. When you enter the town, you will meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place. They will have harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying. **6** Then the spirit of the LORD will rush upon you and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed into a different person.

**7** "When these signs have taken place, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God will be with you. **8** You will go down to Gilgal before me. I am going to join you there to offer burnt offerings and to make peace offerings. You should wait for seven days, until I arrive and tell you what to do."

**9** As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed his inmost person. All these signs happened on that very day.

**10** When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a company of prophets was coming out to meet him. Then the spirit of God rushed upon Saul and he prophesied among them. **11** When everyone who had known him previously saw him prophesying with the prophets, the people all asked one another, "What on earth has happened to the son of Kish? Does even Saul belong with the prophets?"

**12** A man who was from there replied, "And who is their father?" Therefore this became a proverb: "Is even Saul among the prophets?" **13** When Saul had finished prophesying, he went to the high place.

**14** Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, "Where did you go?" Saul replied, "To look for the donkeys. But when we realized they were lost, we went to Samuel." **15** Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." **16** Saul said to his uncle, "He assured us that the donkeys had been found." But Saul did not tell him what Samuel had said about the matter of kingship.

**17** Then Samuel called the people together before the LORD at Mizpah. **18** He said to the Israelites, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt and I delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that oppressed you. **19** But today you have rejected your God who saves you from all your trouble and distress. You have said, "No!

Appoint a king over us." Now take your positions before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.'"

**20** Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen by lot. **21** Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the family of Matri was chosen by lot. At last Saul son of Kish was chosen by lot. But when they looked for him, he was nowhere to be found.

**22** So they inquired again of the LORD, "Has the man arrived here yet?" The LORD said, "He has hidden himself among the equipment."

**23** So they ran and brought him from there. When he took his position among the people, he stood head and shoulders above them all. **24** Then Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen?

Indeed, there is no one like him among all the people!" All the people shouted out, "Long live the king!"

**25** Then Samuel talked to the people about how the kingship would work. He wrote it all down on a scroll and set it before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away to their homes. **26** Even Saul went to his home in Gibeah. With him went some brave men whose hearts God had touched.

**27** But some wicked men said, "How can this man save us?"

They despised him and did not even bring him a gift. But Saul said nothing about it.

**1** Nahash the Ammonite marched against Jabesh Gilead.

All the men of Jabesh Gilead said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us and we will serve you."

Guzik - 1 Samuel 11:1-15

### **1 Samuel 11 - Saul's Victory at Jabesh Gilead**

A. Saul's victory.

1. (1-2) Nahash the Ammonite gives an ultimatum to an Israelite city.

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you." And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, "On this *condition* I will make *a covenant* with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel."

#### **a. Encamped against Jabesh Gilead:**

Nahash the Ammonite has surrounded this Israelite city, and simply by doing so, he has made his demands clear. They must either surrender, or be conquered.

i. Why did the Ammonites attack Jabesh?

"Probably to revenge and to recover their former great loss by Jephthah, Jdg. 11:33.

*Jabesh-gilead* was beyond Jordan, and near the Ammonites, who dwelt in part of

Arabia." (Poole)

#### **b. Make a covenant with us, and we will**

**serve you:** The men of Jabesh Gilead feel this is their only hope of survival. Either they surrender to Nahash (**we will serve you**) under agreed upon terms (**make a covenant with us**), or they will simply be killed and looted.

i. It might seem to us that the men of Jabesh Gilead are cowards, and unwilling to fight against this enemy. But the odds were great against them, and the expected to



simply be taxed by Nahash. It was if they were being mugged, and they had the opportunity to negotiate with the mugger, and strike a deal with the mugger they could live with.

ii. At the same time, where was their trust in God? Yes, they were in what seemed to be in an impossible place, but that is where the power of God can shine the brightest.

"Instead of humbling themselves before God and confessing the sins that had brought

them into trouble, they put God altogether aside, and basely offered to become the

servants of the Ammonites . . . We see here

the sad effect of sin and careless living in

lowering men's spirits, sapping courage, and

discouraging noble effort. Oh, it is pitiable to see men tamely submitting to a vile master!

Yet how often is the sight repeated! How

often to men virtually say to the devil, 'Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee'!"

(Balike)

c. **That I may put out your right eyes:** When the men of Jabesh Gilead as Nahash for a covenant, he agrees to settle peacefully with them - *if* all the men of the city will have their **right eyes** gouged out. Certainly, Nahash meant business!

i. Why did Nahash make this demand? Of all the things he could have demanded, why does he want to **put out your right eyes**?

First, it was to glorify himself by humiliating the men of this city, and all of Israel. Half-blinding the men of this city would **bring reproach on all Israel** by making Israel look weak and unable to prevent such an atrocity. Second, it was to make the men of

Jabesh Gilead unable to fight effectively in

battle. In hand-to-hand combat, and man with one eye has less depth perception, and is at a disadvantage to a man with two eyes.

ii. "He who opposes his shield to the enemy with his left hand, thereby hides his left eye, and looks at his enemy with his right eye; he therefore who plucks out that right eye makes men useless in war." (Theodoret, cited in Clarke)

d. We can see in this account a similarity between Satan, our spiritual enemy, and Nahash, the enemy of Israel.

i. Satan attacks us, but cannot do anything against us without our agreement. He asks for, and requires our *surrender*.

ii. Satan wants us to serve him, and will attempt to intimidate us into giving in to him.

iii. Satan wants to humiliate us, and exalt himself over us. Through humiliating one saint, Satan wants **to bring reproach** on all God's people.

iv. Satan wants to take away our ability to effectively fight against him.

v. Satan wants to blind us, and if he cannot blind us completely, he will blind us partially.

vi. The name **Nahash** means *serpent* or *snake*!

2. (3) The answer of the elders of Jabesh Gilead.

Then the elders of Jabesh said to him, "Hold off for seven days, that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then, if *there is* no one to save us, we will come out to you."

a. **Hold off for seven days . . . if there is no one to save us, we will come out to you:** The men of Jabesh Gilead are in a difficult spot.

They are horrified at the demand of Nahash, but they also know they have no other choice. **If there is no one to**

**save** them, Nahash can do to them as he pleases, and losing an eye seems better to them than losing their lives.

b. Was there **no one to save** them? The men of Jabesh didn't know for certain. But they did know there was no hope in and of themselves, that they had to have a savior.

i. In one way, the men of Jabesh Gilead were in a good place, because they absolutely knew two things. They knew their need to be saved, and they knew they could not save themselves. Many today - even in the church - don't know what the men of Jabesh Gilead knew. Many today don't really know their need to be *saved*, rescued from the righteous judgment of God against them and their sin. And many today don't really know they *can not* save themselves. They still think in their hearts that they can do it!

ii. In another way, the men of Jabesh Gilead were in a bad place. They knew their need of a savior, and they knew they could not save themselves. Yet, *they did not know if there was anyone to save them*. We can know. We can know what John said in 1Jo.

4:14: *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.*

c. Why did Nahash let the messengers go? It seems strange that he allowed them to leave, and to see if Israel could muster up the troops to come and defeat him. But Nahash had two reasons. First, he was confident of Israel's

disunity, and figured they would be unable to find anyone to save them. Second, by allowing the messengers to go through all Israel, he was making his name big and his reputation fearsome throughout the whole nation.

3. (4-5) Saul hears of the plight of Jabesh Gilead.

So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and

told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, "What *troubles* the people, that they weep?" And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh.

a. **So the messengers came:** As the messengers spread out over all Israel, they came to Gibeah, Saul's home city. Upon hearing of the plight of Jabesh Gilead, **all the people lifted up their voices and wept**. This was exactly the reaction Nahash was hoping for!

b. **Coming behind the herd from the field:** See the humility of the king of Israel! Saul had already been anointed and recognized as king over Israel, yet in a sense there was nothing for him to do. He really didn't know where to begin when it came to setting up a royal court and a bureaucracy, and Israel never had one before. So, he just went back home, got to work in **the field**, and figured God would tell him what to do when the time was right!

i. Saul was wise in going back to the farm. He knew it was the LORD's job to raise him up as king over the nation, and he knew the LORD would do it in the right way at the right time. He didn't have to promote himself, or scheme on his own behalf. The LORD would do it.

ii. In this, Saul is a good example of Jesus, the King of Kings. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and here Saul is simply serving, not being served.

c. **They told him the words of the men of Jabesh:** This also shows there was no established system of government in Israel.

Otherwise, the king would have been the first to know of the threat against Jabesh, instead of hearing the news second or third hand.

4. (6-8) Zealous for Israel's cause, Saul angrily gathers an army.

Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly

aroused. So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen."

And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. When he

numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

a. **Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul:** It was time for Saul to act, and God was with Saul. **The Spirit of God came upon Saul**, but it did not come to entertain him or to thrill him.

It came to equip him for service, so that he could *do* something for the LORD.

i. This is always God's pattern. He doesn't want us to seek the Spirit selfishly, but to be empowered to be used by Him to touch

others. Jesus told His disciples before He ascended into heaven: *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in*

*Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth* (Act. 1:8). The power was given and received to *do* something for the LORD!

b. **And his anger was greatly aroused:** This was a good anger, and Spirit-led anger within Saul. The Bible says we can *be angry, and do not sin* (Eph. 4:26), but most of our anger is selfish. Here, Saul's anger is not out of a personal

sense of hurt or offense, but out of a righteous concern for the cause of the LORD among His people.

**c. So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them**

**in pieces:** In doing this, Saul was delivering a clear threat to the people of Israel. The manner of the threat seems more from the Mafia than from the people of God, but Saul wanted it clear that failure to step up and defend the cause of God at this time would be sin, and it would be punished as sin.

i. "In some such way, as Sir Walter Scott tells us, the old Highland chieftain used to

summon the clans for war by the mission of the fiery cross. Killing an animal, kindling a fire, the cross was burnt in the flames,

which were quenched in blood, and was sent throughout the land, and every man who saw it was bound to hasten in the

field." (Meyer)

ii. When the cause is right and the need desperate, it is wrong to do nothing. Doing nothing in such cases is sin, and when it comes to the sin of doing nothing, *be sure your sin will find you out* (Num. 32:23).

**d. Whoever does not go out with Saul and**

**Samuel to the battle:** "Saul's inclusion of Samuel implies that he expects the prophet to accompany him into battle in view of the fact that Saul is responding to the Spirit of God." (<Baldwin.htm>)

**e. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one**

**consent:** Saul's bloody threat worked. When those hunks of ox-flesh came special delivery, all Israel knew there was a leader in Israel who meant business. They knew **the LORD** was calling them to do something about the crisis of Jabesh Gilead.

5. (9-11) The defeat of Nahash the Ammonite.

And they said to the messengers who came,  
"Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh Gilead:  
'Tomorrow, by *the time* the sun is hot, you shall have help.'"  
Then the messengers came and reported *it* to the men of  
Jabesh, and they were glad. Therefore the men of Jabesh  
said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do  
with us whatever seems good to you." So it was, on the next  
day, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they  
came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and  
killed Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it  
happened that those who survived were  
scattered, so that no two of them were left  
together.

a. **The messengers came and reported it to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad:** Certainly they **were glad!** Before, they did not know if there was anyone to save them. Now they know they have someone to save them!

Knowing we have a savior should make us **glad.**

b. **Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you:** Here, the men of Jabesh Gilead are deceiving Nahash. They are speaking as if they will surrender to Nahash, so his army will be unprepared for battle.

i. Of course, one might say they really didn't *lie*. After all, the next day they would indeed **come out** to Nahash, and he could do to them **whatever seems good**. It is just that what Nahash thought was good might change when he was being attacked by

Saul's army of 330,000 men of Israel.

ii. "The message contained a clever ambiguity, while giving the impression that surrender was intended." (Baldwin)

c. **Saul put the men into three companies:** Saul appears to be a man of good military strategy. He thought

out the attack before the battle started.

d. **Killed Ammonites until the heat of the**

**day . . . no two of them were left together:** Through Saul's action, and by God's blessing, the victory was total. Nahash and his army were utterly routed, and the city of Jabesh Gilead was saved.

B. Saul's coronation.

1. (12-13) Saul shows mercy to his former opponents.

Then the people said to Samuel, "Who *is* he who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel."

a. **Who is he who said, "Shall Saul reign over us?"** At this moment of great victory, the supporters of Saul want to expose and kill those who were hesitant to support him as king (as described in 1Sa. 10:27).

b. **Not a man shall be put to death this**

**day:** Saul wisely knew this was no time to take revenge on his opponents. Satan, having failed in the attack through Nahash, was now trying to attack Israel - even in victory - by dividing the nation against each other. Satan will attack us anyway he can, and often use times of victory to attack.

c. **Today the LORD has accomplished**

**salvation in Israel:** In 1Sa. 11:3, the men of Jabesh Gilead wondered if there was *one to save us*. Saul was the man the LORD raised up to bring the victory, yet Saul himself knew that the **LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel**. It was the LORD who did the saving, and Saul was humble enough to know it. At this moment of victory, it would have been all the more tempting to take the credit for himself.

i. The phrase **the LORD has**

**accomplished salvation in Israel** points us to Jesus, because His name means *the LORD is salvation*. Whenever salvation is accomplished, it is through Jesus!



2. (14-15) Saul is accepted as king by the entire nation.

Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

a. **Samuel said to the people:** Samuel, as well as anyone, knew that the people were not entirely behind Saul when he was proclaimed as king in Gilgal (1Sa. 10:24, 27). So Samuel wisely sees this time of victory as a strategic opportunity to **renew the kingdom** at Gilgal.

i. Saul had to *prove himself* before many would accept that he was the king. This is not necessarily a bad thing. It is one thing

for a person to be "anointed" or "appointed,"

but the evidence must be in the *doing*. It was understandable for some to say, "Let's see what kind of man this Saul is," but once it was demonstrated (as it was in this chapter) it would have been wrong for them

to fail to support Saul. "Unwittingly, the Ammonites provided just the opportunity

Saul needed to take an initiative, and to

prove himself as well to Israel at large that he could 'save' his people from

oppressors." (Baldwin)

b. **They made Saul king before the LORD in**

**Gilgal:** It wasn't that Saul *was not* king before this. He was anointed as king by Samuel (1Sa.

10:1) and recognized by king by much of the

nation of Israel (1Sa. 10:24). Yet, there was a sense in which Saul was not king until virtually all the nation recognized him as king, and here that recognition is given.

i. "Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on his holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the

appointment, and made Him King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly we drift from our strenuous endeavour to act always as his devoted subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom, and reverently make Him King before the Lord . . . There is a sense in which we can consecrate ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often." (Meyer)

**c. There Saul and all the men of Israel**

**rejoiced greatly:** They did indeed! After all, now they felt they had a king, and a good king.

It is a great blessing to be under a great, victorious king!

i. Saul won the battle that day, but it was more than one battle he won. This chapter records Saul's *inward* and *outward* battles. The outward victory was obvious, but inwardly, Saul fought the strong and subtle temptations to pride, insecurity, and revenge. He won the battle against pride, insecurity, and revenge on this day, and he also won the outward battle. But would he continue to? Only as he was filled with the Spirit of the LORD, and walking in the Spirit, under the leadership of the King of Kings over Israel.

ii. "Thus far Saul acted well, and the kingdom seemed to be confirmed in his hand; but soon through *impudence* he lost it." (Clarke) "O Saul, Saul, how well for thee it would have been hadst thou maintained this spirit! For then God would not have had to reject thee from being king." (Blaikie)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** But Nahash the Ammonite said to

them, "The only way I will make a treaty with you is if you let me gouge out the right eye of every one of you and in so doing humiliate all Israel!"

**3** The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Leave us alone for seven days so that we can send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. If there is no one who can deliver us, we will come out voluntarily to you."

**4** When the messengers went to Gibeah (where Saul lived) and informed the people of these matters, all the people wept loudly. **5** Now Saul was walking behind the oxen as he came from the field. Saul asked, "What has happened to the people? Why are they weeping?" So they told him about the men of Jabesh.

**6** The Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and he became very angry. **7** He took a pair of oxen and cut them up. Then he sent the pieces throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, who said, "Whoever does not go out after Saul and after Samuel should expect this to be done to his oxen!" Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they went out as one army.

**8** When Saul counted them at Bezek, the Israelites were 300,000 strong and the men of Judah numbered 30,000.

**9** They said to the messengers who had come, "Here's what you should say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow deliverance will come to you when the sun is fully up.'" When the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh Gilead, they were happy. **10** The men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you and you can do with us whatever you wish."

**11** The next day Saul placed the people in three groups. They went to the Ammonite camp during the morning watch and struck them down until the hottest part of the day. The survivors scattered; no two of them remained together.

**12** Then the people said to Samuel, "Who were the ones asking, 'Will Saul reign over us?' Hand over those men so we may execute them!" **13** But Saul said, "No one will be killed

on this day. For today the LORD has given Israel a victory!"

**14** Samuel said to the people, "Come on! Let's go to Gilgal and renew the kingship there." **15** So all the people went to Gilgal, where they established Saul as king in the LORD's presence. They offered up peace offerings there in the LORD's presence. Saul and all the Israelites were very happy.

**1** Samuel said to all Israel, "I have done everything you requested. I have given you a king.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 12:1-25

### ***1 Samuel 12 - Samuel's Speech at Saul's Coronation***

A. Testimony to Samuel's integrity.

1. (1-3) Samuel talks about his leadership over Israel.

Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons *are* with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox

have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received *any* bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore *it* to you."

a. **Samuel said to all Israel:** After the victory of Saul over the Ammonites in 1 Samuel 11, Samuel knows the nation will now begin to look to this king for leadership. Here, in this chapter, he is helping Israel to make the transition from Samuel's leadership to Saul's leadership. Samuel makes this clear when he says, " **now here is the king**" and " **I am old and gray headed.**"

Samuel is telling Israel that his day is over, and Saul's day is beginning.

i. It is true that *Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life* (1Sa. 7:15), but now that a king has been raised up, his role will change and diminish. Samuel never officially "stepped

down" from leading Israel as a judge, but he would not allow his shadow to eclipse Saul. Perhaps he knew Saul would have enough trouble on his own, and didn't want to be accused of subverting Saul's reign as king.

ii. In this, Samuel shows himself as a truly godly man. He is willing to pass from the scene when God raises up another leader. His heart is the same as John the Baptist's heart towards Jesus: *He must increase, but I must decrease* (Joh. 3:30). Samuel would not grasp onto a position when God was changing it.

**b. Indeed I have heeded your voice in all**

**that you have said to me:** Samuel wanted it clearly known that it was not *his* idea to appoint a king over Israel. This idea began in the hearts of Israel, not in the heart and mind of God. God allowed it, and directed its execution, but it was the **voice** of the people that prompted it.

**c. My sons are with you:** In 1Sa. 8:1-5, Samuel was challenged to take his sons out of leadership in Israel, because they were not godly men. Though it must have been difficult, he did it. The words **my sons are with you** are proof; Samuel's sons were simply a part of the assembly of Israel, not "up on the platform" with Samuel.

i. "It is generally agreed that these words intimate that Samuel had deprived them of their public employ, and reduced them to a level with the common people." (Clarke)

**d. I have walked before you from my**

**childhood to this day:** Samuel remembers his humble beginnings as a child, dedicated to the LORD and serving Israel and the LORD at the tabernacle (1Sa. 2:18, 3:1).

i. **I have walked before you** is not the idea "I have been on display before you."

Instead, it is the idea of a shepherd walking before his flock, leading it on. Samuel had been a godly leader and shepherd for Israel these many years.

e. **Witness against me before the LORD:** As Samuel speaks to the nation about the transition of leadership, he wants it clear that he has not **defrauded** or **oppressed** or been corrupt in anyway. He simply challenges the nation: "If I have wronged you or been corrupt, come forward now and declare it."

i. This is impressive as an example of the godly character of Samuel. Certainly, few people could give such an invitation to accuse!

ii. Why? Why does Samuel do what seems to be a purely self-justifying and self-glorifying thing? From what we know of the character of Samuel in other passages, we have to believe this is more than him saying, "Look at how good I am." Instead, it seems that Samuel wants the nation to know that he has passed a good legacy of leadership to the new king Saul. He wants Israel to recognize that he hasn't handed Saul a mess that he has to clean up. If Saul should prove to be a poor leader, no one could say it was because of the bad example set by Samuel.

f. **I will restore it:** It seems as if Samuel is saying, "I may have wronged someone without knowing it. If that is the case, state it now, so I can make it right. I don't want to leave any unfinished business." This testifies to Samuel's humble heart.

2. (4-5) Israel affirms the blameless leadership of Samuel.

And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand." Then he said to them, "The LORD *is* witness against you, and His

anointed *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they answered, " *He is* witness."

a. **You have not defrauded us or oppressed**

**us:** Israel knew Samuel had been a good, godly leader. He had not led them for what he could get from them, but for what he could give to them.

i. This is a priceless testimony for any leader. How precious to stand before your own people, and to hear them affirm the integrity of your leadership! Samuel could only make the challenge of 1Sa. 12:3 because he knew the answer ahead of time.

b. **The LORD is witness against you, and**

**His anointed is witness this day:** Samuel settles the matter. All parties agree that he has led Israel well. This is the second time Samuel has mentioned **His anointed** in this passage, and the phrase refers to Saul, because he was anointed as king (1Sa. 10:1). Samuel deliberately included Saul in all this to make the idea of a transition between his leadership and Saul's clear.

c. In what sense was the LORD **witness**

**against** them? If Israel were to later accuse Samuel of wrong, he could call them back to this time, and what they said here would be a **witness against** them. As well, if Israel ever tried to blame Saul's problems as king on Samuel, what they said here would be a **witness against** them.

B. Samuel challenges Israel to serve God under their new king.

1. (6-12) Samuel gives a brief history lesson.

Then Samuel said to the people, " *It is* the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD

which He did to you and your fathers: When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.' And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God *was* your king."

a. **The righteous acts of the LORD:** Samuel, in this remembrance of God's work from the time of the Exodus until his present day, focuses not on the history of Israel, but on the history of **the righteous acts of the LORD**.

b. **Who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place:** Israel should remember their salvation from slavery and the new life God gave them in the Promised Land. This is one of **the righteous acts of the LORD**.

c. **He sold them into the hand of Sisera:** Israel should remember how God allowed a disobedient Israel to be under the domination of their enemies, as a chastisement intending to bring them to repentance. This is one of **the righteous acts of the LORD**.

i. We should recognize God's chastisement as one of **the righteous acts of the LORD**. His discipline is just as **righteous** as His deliverance.

d. **They cried out to the LORD . . . now deliver us from the hand of our enemies,**



**and we will serve You . . . And the LORD**

**sent . . . and delivered you:** Israel should remember that when they **cried out** to God, confessed their sin and humbled themselves in repentance before Him, that He **delivered** them. This is one of **the righteous acts of the LORD**.

i. The list of the deliverers God used

**(Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and**

**Samuel)** shows two things. First, it shows Israel was constantly in need of deliverance because of their sin, and God kept delivering them when they repented. Second, it showed that God didn't need just one man.

He could use many different leaders to do

His work in Israel. So, even if Samuel is *old and gray headed* (1Sa. 11:2), God can now raise up a Saul.

ii. **Jerubbaal** was another name for Gideon (Jdg. 6:32). Who was **Bedan**? We have no mention of him in the book of Judges.

Perhaps he was a deliverer known in their

history, but no recorded in the book of

Judges. Or, **Bedan** may be a variant spelling or name for *Barak*, mentioned in Jdg. 4:6.

The Septuagint, an ancient translation of the Old Testament, translates the name as

*Barak*. Other ancient translations have *Samson*, and some commentators believe *Jair* is intended. But really doesn't matter!

iii. Youngblood feels that one reason Gideon

is mentioned is "because he specifically refused to establish dynastic as opposed to

divine rule over his countrymen . . . for

which refusal he must surely have been one of Samuel's heroes."

iv. "The language of vv.9-11 is heavily

dependent on terminology characteristic of the Book of Judges. The dreary cycle of

rebellion-retribution-repentance-restoration described throughout that book . . . is reprised here." (Youngblood)

**e. Nahash the king of the Ammonites came**

**against you:** Samuel remembers the most recent example of God's deliverance for Israel (recorded in 1 Samuel 11). Samuel is tying together the story of God's deliverance for Israel, from the time of the Exodus to the present day. Each of these were examples of **the righteous acts of the LORD**.

i. Why the history lesson? Because as Israel makes the transition into monarchy, they need to remember **the righteous acts of the LORD**. Everything the LORD wants to do in our lives now is in the setting of what He has already done in our lives.

**f. You said to me, "No, but a king shall reign over us," when the LORD your God was your king:** As they begin to live under the king, Samuel reminds the nation of their disobedience desire for a king. The LORD had been a good king for Israel, but they wanted a king for carnal, fleshly reasons.

2. (13-15) **If you fear the LORD:** a choice for Israel.

"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen *and* whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers."

**a. Here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired:**

Samuel probably had the feeling, "Here is the king you wanted. You will find that he isn't quite the king you need, but he is the

king you wanted."

**b. If you fear the LORD and serve Him and**

**obey His voice:** Samuel presents Israel with an important choice. They had been disobedient in their desire for a king, yet God had given them a king. Even so, if they would **fear the LORD and serve Him**, God could still bless them.

i. One wrong turn had not put them out of God's plan forever. Yes, Israel should have never sought a human king. But now they had one, and Samuel simply calls them to serve the LORD where they are at now. We need to know that one wrong turn doesn't wreck our lives before God! Instead of agonizing over the past, get right with God *today*. **Fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the**

**LORD**, and God will bring good even out of yesterday's wrong turn.

**c. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD . . . then the hand of the LORD**

**will be against you:** Samuel puts the choice before Israel. They had made a wrong turn, yet God puts them at fork in the road. On one side is submission to God and obedience; on the other is rebellion and disobedience. If they choose the wrong path, they can trust God will not bless it.

**d. As it was against your fathers:** Every individual every generation is tempted to think of itself as a special exception. They know of *the righteous acts of the LORD* in previous generations, yet somehow feel they are excepted from God's correction or judgment.

Samuel is reminding Israel they are not any different from their fathers, and God will not deal with them any differently than He did with their fathers.

3. (16-18) God confirms Samuel's word with a sign.

"Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: *Is* today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves." So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

a. **Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do:** Samuel will pray and ask God to send a sign to confirm His word. This is a concession to the wicked hearts of the people, because Samuel knows only a sign from God will impress them.

b. **That you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves:** Why would Samuel and the LORD wait until now for such a dramatic sign? Why not do it when Israel first asked for a king, so they would have known their sin right then, and taken back their request for a king?

i. Because God had a purpose in allowing the "people's king," Saul, to come first.

ii. Because if it had happened in the first days of Saul's reign, the people would have cast him off just as quickly, and just as wrongly, as they asked for him. Now, that his reign has been confirmed by the victory of 1 Samuel 11 and accepted by the people, they can be more directly confronted with their sin.

iii. Because Samuel might have been accused of reproving the people out of a personal sense of hurt. By waiting until now, everyone knows that Samuel isn't saying,

"Get rid of Saul so I can lead the nation again."

iv. Because now, *Israel rejoiced greatly* (1Sa. 11:15). They were perhaps a little too excited about their new king, and Samuel wants them to have a more spiritual perspective.

v. "This is an excellent way of preaching - to mingle promises and threatenings. Sour and sweet make the best sauce." (Trapp)

c. **The LORD sent thunder and rain that**

**day:** Thunder and rain were unusual during **the wheat harvest**. This was a truly remarkable sign from God.

i. The sign was especially meaningful because one of the common gods of that day was Baal, who was thought to be the god of thunder and rain. The LORD was showing that He was the true God of the weather.

ii. Because it was **the wheat harvest**, the sign displayed not only God's power, but His judgment also. Heavy rain during the

harvest could destroy all their crops. The sign was a warning. "In that part of the world not only is 'rain in harvest . . . not

fitting' (Pro. 26:1), it is so totally unexpected that it could easily be interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure." (Youngblood) d. **The people greatly feared the LORD and**

**Samuel:** The result was good, but it shows something weak and carnal in the hearts of the people. Didn't they know God was this powerful before? Perhaps their knowledge of it was purely intellectual knowledge. They *could* have known the

power and majesty and sovereignty of God in their hearts before this, and then it would have been unnecessary to bring a sign

before **the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.**

i. Even more impressive than thunder during harvest time is the thunder of the Holy Spirit's conviction in the heart. Even more impressive than rain during harvest time is the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The inner work is more effective in making us serve God than any outward sign, no matter how impressive.

e. **I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder . .**

**. So Samuel called to the LORD:** This is an impressive example of power in prayer. Samuel is known in the Bible as a

mighty man of prayer (Psa. 99:6, Jer. 15:1).

4. (19) Israel sees their sin of desiring a king.

And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

a. **Pray for your servants:** Samuel had just shown himself a mighty man of prayer, and Israel now knows how much they need prayer.

It made sense to ask Samuel to pray for them!

b. **We have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves:** Finally, Israel sees their sin of wanting a king. They see it too late; if only they had realized it in 1 Samuel 8, when Samuel first warned them! Now they are stuck with a king, yet God can still turn it for good if Israel will repent and seek the LORD.

i. It is sad that it took *thunder and rain* for Israel to be impressed with God's power and majesty. What will it take for us to fear the LORD and treat Him as a God of power and majesty?

ii. Trapp on **we have added to all our**

**sins:** "By occasion of this sin, they came to the sight and recognition of many more. Our lives are as full of sins as the firmament is of stars, or the furnace of sparks."

5. (20-25) Samuel exhorts Israel to walk right with the LORD today.

Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear.

You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people.

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

a. **You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart:** Samuel will not minimize Israel's sin.

Yet, he does not want them to dwell on the sin of the past, but to get on walking with the LORD today.

i. The Living Bible puts the thought well:

*Make sure now that you worship the Lord with true enthusiasm, and that you don't turn your back on Him in any way.* We can't do anything about yesterday, and at the present moment we can't serve God

tomorrow. At the present moment, all we can do is **not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all**

**your heart.** Satan would love for us to live in the past or in the future; to do anything but serve the LORD with all we have right now!

**b. Do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing:** Samuel wants Israel to know that rejecting the LORD, and turning aside from Him, *just doesn't work.*

If they will not serve God out of spiritual reasons, then let them do it for pragmatic reasons: nothing else can **profit or deliver!**

i. It is precious place in our walk with God when we realize this. It isn't easy to come to this place; we usually learn by bitter experience that nothing else can **profit or deliver.** But how wonderful to say with Peter, " *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*" (Joh. 6:68). What a gift to know that as tough as it might be serving God, it is only worse to **turn aside** from Him!

**c. For the LORD will not forsake His people**

**. . . it has pleased the LORD to make you**

**His people:** Samuel wants Israel to know that *God loves them.* This is why, despite the sin of their past, they can get on with serving the LORD and still see His blessing. Because *God loves them.* His favor towards Israel was not prompted by good they had done, were doing, or promised to do. It was **for His great**

**name's sake,** because it **pleased the LORD**

to do it. The reasons were in Him, not in Israel.

i. Why doesn't God give up on Israel?

*Because He loves them.* Why is God willing to put away the sin of the past? *Because He loves them.* Why is God willing to give them a new start? *Because He loves them.* Only God's love makes any sense of this!



d. **Far be it for me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you:** Samuel knew the best thing he could do for

Israel was to pray for them. His words to them would make no difference if the LORD was not working in their hearts, and the best way to cultivate the working of the LORD in their lives was through prayer.

i. Samuel could have felt hurt that the people rejected him and the LORD as leaders over the nation. He might have been bitter against the people, and refused to pray for them. But Samuel was a more godly man than that. "Think not that because you have so highly disobliged and rejected me, that I will revenge myself by neglecting to pray for you, or by praying against you, as I have now done for your conviction and humiliation, and so for you preservation; I am sensible it is my duty, as I am a man, an Israelite, a minister, a prophet, to pray for you." (Poole)

ii. Many would say, "I promise I will *start* praying for you." For Samuel, *starting* to pray was a non-issue, because he was already praying. For him, the issue was **ceasing to pray**. "Samuel had become so rooted in the habit of prayer for the people that he seems to start at the very thought of brining his intercession to an end." (Spurgeon)

iii. This statement of Samuel makes it plain: it is a sin for a leader of God's people to stop praying for them. It is the most basic of his duties as a leader. If it is sin to *stop* praying, how much worse must it be to even fail to *start* praying!

iv. But the blessing of unceasing prayer is not the property of the preacher or leader

alone. All can share in it. "Perhaps you will never preach, but you may pray. If you cannot climb the pulpit you may bow before the mercy-seat, and be quite as great a blessing." (Spurgeon)

e. **I will teach you the good and the right way:** Samuel would pray, but he would not *only* pray. There was still a place for teaching, and Samuel would faithfully fulfill that role as well.

i. So, is it better to preach or to pray?

"Whether a minister shall do more good to others by his prayers or preaching, I will not determine, saith one; but he shall certainly by his prayers reap more comfort to himself." (Trapp)

ii. Samuel wants the people of Israel to know that even as he is stepping back and allowing Saul to emerge as a leader, he will not forsake Israel. He will continue to lead and to serve them, but more in a spiritual way, through prayer and teaching. Saul will take the more visible reins of leadership.

f. **Only fear the LORD . . . for consider**

**what great things He has done for you:** All of our service, all of our obedience, all of our love for God should be put in this context. We do it because of the **great things He has done for us**. We don't serve God so as to persuade Him to do **great things** for us. He has done the **great things**, and asks us to receive them by faith. Then we serve Him because of the **great things he has done for us**.

i. We can only keep perspective in our Christian lives if we keep focused on **what great things He has done for you**. And if we lose perspective, *everything* is distorted.

Police in Seal Beach, California, got an urgent call from a resident looking through his new telescope: a pink Corvette was

being ravaged in the surf, and the caller was afraid that someone might be trapped inside. Officers rushed to the scene, but couldn't find the car. The man confirmed he could still see it, so officers came to his house to take a look. Through his telescope, they saw it too: a "Barbie-sized" toy car on the beach, highly magnified by the powerful lens. "Had he panned his telescope up a little from the ocean . . . he would've realized what he was looking at," said police Sgt. Rick Ransdell. The cops recovered the toy, which was less than a foot long, he said. Many people tend to magnify their problems and lose sight of **what great things He has done for you.**

**g. If you still do wickedly, you shall be**

**swept away:** This warning became the sad legacy of Israel, when they were conquered and taken from the land in captivity.

i. "Never was a people more fully warned, and never did a people profit less by the warning." (Clarke)

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Now look! This king walks before you. As for me, I am old and gray, though my sons are here with you. I have walked before you from the time of my youth till the present day. **3** Here I am. Bring a charge against me before the LORD and before his chosen king. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I wronged? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I taken a bribe so that I would overlook something? Tell me, and I will return it to you!"

**4** They replied, "You have not wronged us or oppressed us. You have not taken anything from the hand of anyone." **5** He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his

chosen king is witness this day, that you have not found any reason to accuse me.” They said, “He is witness!”

**6** Samuel said to the people, “The LORD is the one who chose Moses and Aaron and who brought your ancestors up from the land of Egypt. **7** Now take your positions, so I may confront you before the LORD regarding all the LORD’s just actions toward you and your ancestors. **8**

When Jacob entered Egypt, your ancestors cried out to the LORD. The LORD sent Moses and Aaron, and they led your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

**9** “But they forgot the LORD their God, so he gave them into the hand of Sisera, the general in command of Hazor’s army, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

**10** Then they cried out to the LORD and admitted, ‘We have sinned, for we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the images of Ashtoreth. Now deliver us from the hand of our enemies so that we may serve you.’ **11** So the LORD sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hand of the enemies all around you, and you were able to live securely.

**12** “When you saw that King Nahash of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, ‘No! A king will rule over us’ – even though the LORD your God is your king! **13** Now look! Here is the king you have chosen – the one that you asked for! Look, the LORD has given you a king! **14** If you fear the LORD, serving him and obeying him and not rebelling against what he says, and if both you and the king who rules over you follow the LORD your God, all will be well. **15** But if you don’t obey the LORD and rebel against what the LORD says, the hand of the LORD will be against both you and your king.

**16** “So now, take your positions and watch this great thing that the LORD is about to do in your sight. **17** Is this not the time of the wheat harvest? I will call on the LORD

so that he makes it thunder and rain. Realize and see what a great sin you have committed before the LORD by asking for a king for yourselves.”

**18** So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD made it thunder and rain that day. All the people were very afraid of both the LORD and Samuel. **19** All the people said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God on behalf of us – your servants – so we won’t die, for we have added to all our sins by asking for a king.”

**20** Then Samuel said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. You have indeed sinned. However, don’t turn aside from the LORD. Serve the LORD with all your heart. **21** You should not turn aside after empty things that can’t profit and can’t deliver, since they are empty. **22** The LORD will not abandon his people because he wants to uphold his great reputation. The LORD was pleased to make you his own people. **23** As far as I am concerned, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you! I will instruct you in the way that is good and upright. **24**

However, fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Just look at the great things he has done for you!

**25** But if you continue to do evil, both you and your king will be swept away.”

**1** Saul was [thirty] years old when he began to reign; he ruled over Israel for [forty] years.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 13:1-23

### ***1 Samuel 13 - Saul's Disobedience***

A. The Philistine threat.

1. (1-2) Saul assembles Israel's first standing army.

Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself three thousand *men* of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.

a. **Saul chose for himself three thousand**

**men of Israel:** This was the first "regular" army for Israel. Previously, Israel only had a militia that assembled in times of national

threat. Now, for the first time, Israel has a professional army.

b. **A thousand were with Jonathan:** This is the first mention of Saul's son Jonathan. He will become a prominent, and wonderful, part of this book of 1 Samuel.

i. "This is the first place in which this brave and excellent man appears; a man who

bears one of the most amiable characters in the Bible." (Clarke)

2. (3-4) Jonathan initiates conflict with the Philistines.

And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the

Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard of *it*.

Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" Now all Israel heard it said *that* Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal.

a. **Jonathan attacked the garrison of the**

**Philistines:** Jonathan was a remarkable military leader. He repeatedly demonstrated the ability to lead a successful attack. Yet this attack merely awakened the Philistines. Israel had enjoyed the "peace" of subjected people: everything will be fine as long as you take your place of subjugation. Through this attack, Jonathan proclaimed, "We won't take our place any longer."

i. It clearly says, **Israel had become an**

**abomination to the Philistines.** As long as the Israelites stayed in their weak, defeated "place," the Philistines thought they were great guys. But as soon as the Israelites show some boldness in the LORD, and are willing to battle against the LORD's enemies, the Philistines consider the Israelites **an abomination!**

ii. The same principle is true spiritually in our lives. We don't war against armies of

Philistines; our enemies are *principalities . . .*

*powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this age . . .*

*spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph.

6:12). But our spiritual enemies have the same attitude as

the Philistines. As long as we are weak and

subjected to our spiritual enemies, they

don't mind us at all. They may even kind of

like us. But as soon as we show some

boldness in the LORD, and are willing to

battle against the LORD's enemies, our

spiritual foes consider us **an abomination!**

If peace with devil is more important to you

than victory in the LORD, you will often be

defeated and subjected.

b. **In Geba:** Archaeologists have found this Philistine

fortress at **Geba** (also known as *Gibeah*). The archaeological

evidence shows that it was destroyed but then later rebuilt

by Saul, and then became his palace and fortress.

c. **All Israel heard it said that Saul had**

**attacked a garrison of the Philistines:** Plainly, Saul is

taking the credit for Jonathan's bold attack on the **garrison**

**of the Philistines.** This is a bad sign in the heart and

character of Saul. His own sense of insecurity will not allow

any of his associates (even his own son!) receive credit. He

needs to drink in the praise like a thirsty man drinks water.

d. **And the people were called together to**

**Saul at Gilgal:** King Saul gathers the nation together at

Gilgal to prepare for battle against the Philistines.

3. (5-7) The Philistines prepare their army.

Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel,

thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and

people as the sand which *is* on the seashore in multitude.

And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east

of Beth Aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in

danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. And *some* of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

a. **Thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in**

**multitude:** The Philistines, angered by the Israelites, gather a huge army to crush their rebellious servants.

i. **Thirty thousand chariots** is a huge number, and many people have doubted the accuracy of this number. "This number seems incredible to infidels; to whom it may be sufficient to reply, that it is far more rational to acknowledged a mistake in him that copied out the sacred text in such numeral or historical passages, wherein the doctrine of faith and good life is not directly concerned, than upon such a pretense to

question the truth and divinity of the Holy Scriptures, which are so fully attested, and evidently demonstrated. And the mistake is not great in the Hebrew, *schalosh* for *shelishim*; and so indeed those two ancient translators, the Syriac and Arabic, translate it, and are supposed to have read in their Hebrew copies, *three thousand*." (Poole)

b. **When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger:** Jonathan had been bold enough to launch the initial attack against the Philistines. But the men of Israel are not bold enough to now stand strong against their enemy. In great fear (**the people were**

**distressed**) they hide anywhere they can (**in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits**) or they flee across the Jordan River (**to the land of Gad and Gilead**). This is a low point for Israel!



i. Probably, many of them had thought "What we really need is a king. A king would solve our problems." Now they have a king and the problems are still there. We often think things will "fix" problems when they won't at all. "And hereby God intended to teach them the vanity of all carnal confidence in men; and that they did not one jot less need the help and favour of God now than they did before, when they had no king." (Poole)

c. **As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal:** Saul's position as king had been confirmed at Gilgal (1Sa. 11:15). He is still there, many months later (1Sa. 13:1). It may be that Saul wanted to keep living the glorious day when Samuel recognized and confirmed him as king before the entire nation. But now, since he is king, the men of Israel are expecting greater things from him.

d. **The people followed him trembling:**

They still honored Saul as king, but they are really frightened! It must be better to have **trembling** followers than no followers at all, but how much better if Israel would have really trusted the LORD here!

B. Saul's unlawful sacrifice.

1. (8-9) Saul offers the burnt offering.

Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

a. **He waited seven days:** Saul had been in Gilgal for many months. In the press of the current crisis, every day now took on much more importance. He knew the Philistines were assembling a huge army against him, and that once they were organized they would be much harder to beat. Saul probably felt that a quick response gave them the best chance to win the battle.

b. **According to the time set by Samuel:** Samuel had told Saul to wait for him at Gilgal.

Then Samuel would preside over sacrifices, and Israel would be spiritually prepared for battle.

c. **But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and**

**the people were scattered from him:** This added to Saul's anxiety. First, the waiting for Samuel was stressful, because he felt time was his enemy. Second, **the people were scattered from him**, feeling that the battle wouldn't be fought and that the plan wasn't working out.

i. We might just imagine that in the early part of the week, Saul explained his thinking in a pep talk to the troops: "Men, we're going into battle against the Philistines. They have more men, more chariots, more horses, and better swords and spears than we have." So we have to trust God and make a quick attack before they can get organized. Soon Samuel will come and lead us in sacrifice before God. Then we'll go out and whip the Philistines!" But it didn't happen like that. The days dragged on, and Samuel hadn't come yet. The troops were losing confidence in Saul as a leader, and beginning to scatter. Saul felt he was in a lot of trouble!

d. **And he offered the burnt offering:** This was plainly sinful. First, Saul plainly disobeyed Samuel. Second, Saul was a king, not a priest, and only priests were to offer sacrifices. Saul had no business doing what only a priest should do.

i. History shows how dangerous it is to combine religious and civic authority and God would not allow the kings of Israel to be priests and the priests to be kings. In 2 Chronicles 26, king Uzziah tried to do the work of priest and God struck him with leprosy.

ii. Clearly, out of fear, out of panic, out of not knowing what else to do, Saul does something sinful. "If Saul was among the prophets before, will he now be among the priests? Can there be any devotion in disobedience? O vain man! What can it avail to sacrifice to God, against God?" (Trapp) 2. (10-12) Samuel arrives and Saul tries to explain what he has done. Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* you did not come within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

a. **As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering:** Saul decided to perform the sacrifice not more than an hour before Samuel arrived! If he would have trusted God and waited one more hour, how different things could have been! The last moments of waiting are usually the most difficult, and tempt us most to take matters into our own hands.

b. **Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him:** Saul is really overstepping his bounds now. Literally, the Hebrew says that Saul wanted to *bless* Samuel - perhaps as a priest blesses someone! Now Saul *really* sees himself as a priest!

i. In wanting to *bless* Samuel, Saul may also be trying to show Samuel how spiritual he is.

He is like a child who gets caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and then says to mom, "Let's pray!"

c. **Samuel said, "What have you done?"**

Samuel knew Saul had done something wrong. He could probably smell the sacrifice in the air! But Samuel was not looking for reasons or excuses. There were no valid reasons or excuses. All Samuel wanted to hear was confession and repentance.

d. **And Saul said:** Saul's response is a classic example of excuse making and failure to trust God.

i. **I saw that the people were scattered**

**from me:** "I had to do something to impress the people, and gain their support back." But if Saul would have obeyed and trusted God, God would have seen him to victory over the Philistines with or without the people. It is true, that many of the Israelites may have admired Saul for offering the sacrifice. "My, there's a man of action!

He gets things done! I never understood why the priests were so special anyway."

But Saul could have great numbers in all the polling data, and if God were not with him, it would all crumble. He should have been more concerned with pleasing God instead of pleasing the people.

ii. **You did not come within the days**

**appointed:** "You see Samuel, it was really your fault. If you would have come earlier, I wouldn't have needed to do this." But if Saul would have obeyed and trusted God, God would take care of Samuel and the timing.

Even if Samuel was totally in the wrong, it didn't justify Saul's sin. We often try to blame our sin on someone else.

iii. **The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made**

**supplication to the LORD:** "We really needed God's help against the Philistines, and we needed it now, so I had to do it."

But if Saul would have obeyed and trusted God, the LORD would take care of the Philistines. Saul could have **made supplication to the LORD** in any number of ways. He could have cried out the LORD for the whole nation with a humble heart, but instead he did the *one* thing he must not do: offer a sacrifice.

iv. **Therefore I felt compelled:** "I had to. It just seemed like the right thing to do. I couldn't wait any longer." Even though Saul **felt compelled**, he was not supposed to be ruled by his feelings. He didn't have to sin, though he felt like it.

d. The whole manner of Saul's explanation makes it clear that this was no misunderstanding. He didn't say to Samuel, "Did I do something wrong?" He knew exactly what he was doing, and probably had thought of the excuses ahead of time.

3. (13-14) Samuel proclaims God's judgment upon Saul's household.

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you.

For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

a. **You have done foolishly:** This is a stronger phrase than we might think. Samuel is not saying that Saul is unintelligent or silly; the Bible speaks of the fool as someone morally and spiritually lacking.

b. **You have not kept the commandment of**

**the LORD your God, which He commanded**

**you:** Despite all the excuses, all the reasons, all the blaming of someone else, the bottom line is still the bottom line. Samuel puts it plainly: **you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God.** God commanded you to do something, and you did the opposite.

i. Can not the same be said of all us? **You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you.** Yet there is forgiveness with God, but it is given to the humble heart. It has yet to be seen if Saul will humble himself before God and seek forgiveness and restoration.

c. **For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel**

**forever:** The whole point in being a king was to establish a dynasty, where one's sons would sit on the throne afterwards. God tells Saul that his descendants will not reign after him. Though he is a king, he will not establish the monarchy in Israel.

d. **But now your kingdom shall not**

**continue:** We might have expected that Saul would be "impeached" as king right then and there. After all, Samuel uses the word "**now**."

But Saul will actually reign another 20 years. He will still be on the throne as a king, but it will never be the same, because the end of his kingdom is certain.

i. Was this an over-reaction to what some might think was a rather small sin? "To disobey God in the smallest matter is sin enough: there can be no sin little, because there is no little God to sin against." (Trapp) ii. "Men see nothing but Saul's outward act, which seems small; but God saw with how wicked a mind and heart he did this; with what rebellion against the light of his own conscience, as his own words imply; with what gross infidelity and distrust of God's

providence; with what contempt of God's authority, and justice, and many other wicked principles and motions of his heart, unknown to men. Besides, God clearly saw all that wickedness that yet lay hid in his heart, and foresaw all his other crimes; and there had far more grounds for his sentence against him than we can imagine." (Poole) iii. Because the actual judgment for this sin was so far off, we should regard Samuel's pronouncement of judgment as an invitation to repentance. Many times, when God announces judgment, He will relent if His people repent. "Though God threaten Saul with the loss of his kingdom for this sin, yet it is not improbable that there was a tacit condition implied, as is usual in such cases . . . to wit, if he did not heartily repent of this and of all his sins." (Poole)

**e. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over**

**His people:** Though God has rejected Saul, He has not rejected Israel. Because God loves Israel, he will raise up a king, **a man after His own heart.**

i. Saul was a man after Israel's heart. He was all about image and prestige and the things men look at. But God will now give Israel a man **after His own heart**, and raise that man up to be king.

ii. It would be easy to say that the kingdom was taken from Saul because of his sin. And on one level, that was certainly the case. But it was more than that. After all, didn't David sin also? Yet God never took the kingdom from David and his descendants. Because the issue was bigger than an incident of sin, the issue was being a man after God's own heart.

iii. "As for David, though he was not without his failings, - and those foul ones too, some of them, - yet for the main, his heart was upright, not rotten, as Saul's was." (Trapp) f. What then does it mean to be **a man after His own heart**? We can discover this by looking at the man who was *not a man after His own heart* and comparing him to the man who *was a man after His own heart*.

i. *A man after God's heart honors the LORD.*

Saul was more concerned with his will than God's will. David was a man after God's heart in the way that he knew God's will was most important. Even when David didn't do God's will, he still knew God's will was more important than his own was. All sin is a disregard of God, but David sinned more out of weakness and Saul more out of a disregard for God.

ii. *A man after God's heart enthrones God as king.* For Saul, Saul was king. For David, the LORD God was king. Both David and Saul would have thought sacrifice important before the battle. But David thought it was important because it pleased and honored God. Saul thought it was important because it might help him win a battle. For Saul, God would help him achieve his goals. For David, God Himself was the goal.

iii. *A man after God's heart has a soft, repentant heart.* When Saul was confronted with his sin, he offered excuses. When David was confronted with his sin, he simply said *I have sinned against the LORD* (2Sa. 12:13).

iv. *A man after God's heart loves other people.* Saul became increasingly bitter against people and lived more and more unto himself. David was a man after God's

own heart in the way that he loved people. When David was down and out, he still loved



and served those who were even more down and out than himself (1Sa. 22:1-2).

**g. The LORD has sought for Himself a man**

**after His own heart:** God was *looking* for this kind of man, and God found this man in an unlikely place. In fact, at this time, he wasn't a man at all! God is *still looking* for men and women **after His own heart**.

**i. When we think of a man after His own**

**heart**, many of us think that this is a title reserved for a few "super-spiritual" folks. It isn't for *us*. We want these kinds of people around us, but we never think we can be one of them. We aren't spiritual enough. But

look at David: a warrior who killed hundreds of men with his own hands, a fugitive, a

traitor, a man who had seasons of

backsliding, an adulterer, a murderer. Yet he could be called

**a man after His own heart**. If David can have our sins, then we can have his heart. We can love God and pursue Him with the kind of focus and heart

David had.

**C. The Philistine threat.**

**1. (15-18) The Philistines begin their raids.**

Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people present with him, about six hundred men.

Saul, Jonathan his son, and the people present with them remained in Gibeah of Benjamin. But the Philistines encamped in Michmash. Then raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned to the

road to Ophrah, to the land of Shual, another company turned to the road *to* Beth Horon, and another company turned *to* the road of the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

**a. Then Samuel arose:** Samuel had just announced God's judgment to Saul, because

Saul's heart was not after God's heart. Samuel left, probably knowing that the announcement of judgment was an invitation to repentance, and probably knowing that Saul would not repent.

b. **About six hundred men:** Earlier, Saul had about 3,000 in his regular army (1Sa. 13:2).

Now, he is down to six hundred, because many of the people scattered while Saul waited for Samuel (1Sa. 13:8). The loss of so many men was probably the reason why Saul offered the sacrifice without Samuel, and it displayed a heart of distrust and disobedience to God.

i. For a commander, it would be terrible to see an already mismatched force (the Philistines had a huge army, according to 1Sa. 13:5) shrink to one-fifth of its previous size (from 3,000 to 600). Why would God allow this? Simply to test Saul's faith. Would Saul trust in a God great enough to deliver from so many with so few?

c. **Then raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines:** With so many troops, the Philistines could raid at will. They were a fearless, and fearsome army set against Saul and Israel.

2. (19-23) The technological superiority of the Philistines.

Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle; and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads. So it came about, on the day of

battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

**a. There was no blacksmith to be found**

**throughout all the land of Israel:** The Philistines had superior military technology, and they wanted to keep it that way. Since they were a seafaring people, the Philistines traded with the technologically sophisticated cultures to the west, especially the Greeks. They imported weapons and know-how from those distant lands.

i. "It is very likely that in the former wars the Philistines carried away all the smiths

from Israel, as Porsenna did in the peace

which he granted to the Romans, not

permitting any iron to be forged except for

the purposes of agriculture . . . The

Chaldeans did the same to the Jews in the

time of Nebuchadnezzar; they carried away

all the artificers, 2Ki. 24:14; Jer. 24:1, 29:2.

And in the same manner did Cyrus treat the

Lydians." (Clarke)

ii. "For decades archaeologists working at many different sites have unearthed iron

artifacts in bewildering number and variety

dating from the period of greatest Philistine power and

leading to the general consensus

that the metal was introduced into Canaan -

at least for weapons, agricultural tools, and jewelry - by the

Philistines." (Youngblood)

**b. Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears:** Because the Philistines were the first people in Canaan to process iron, they made the most of it and kept the Israelites from using the technology to make better weapons.

**c. All the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare:** By carefully guarding

their military technology, the Philistines kept the Israelites in a subservient place.

i. We might imagine that the Philistine blacksmiths, even though they charged each Israelite **a pim** for sharpening, would never put too fine an edge on anything. First, this was because these farm tools were the only weapons the Israelites had, so why make them so sharp? Secondly, if you make it really sharp, it will be longer before they come back with another **pim** to get their ax sharpened!

**d. There was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people . . .**

**they were found with Saul and Jonathan:** There were so few iron weapons available that only the royal family could be properly equipped! The rest of Israel fought with whatever they could.

i. "The Hebrews say that the angels brought them these arms; but that is not likely." (Trapp)

ii. It was bad enough to be outnumbered so badly. Now, we see God allowed the Philistines to have a huge technological advantage over the Israelites. The only way the Israelites could ever win was to trust in God for everything!

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Saul selected for himself three thousand men from Israel. Two thousand of these were with Saul at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel; the remaining thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.

He sent all the rest of the people back home.

**3** Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost that was at Geba and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul alerted all the land saying, "Let the Hebrews pay attention!" **4** All Israel heard this message, "Saul has attacked the Philistine

outpost, and now Israel is repulsive to the Philistines!” So the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. **5** For the battle with Israel the Philistines had amassed 3,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. **6** The men of Israel realized they had a problem because their army was hard pressed. So the army hid in caves, thickets, cliffs, strongholds, and cisterns. **7** Some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan River to the land of Gad and Gilead. But Saul stayed at Gilgal; the entire army that was with him was terrified. **8** He waited for seven days, the time period indicated by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the army began to abandon Saul.

**9** So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” Then he offered a burnt offering. **10** Just when he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel appeared on the scene. Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.

**11** But Samuel said, “What have you done?” Saul replied, “When I saw that the army had started to abandon me and that you didn’t come at the appointed time and that the Philistines had assembled at Micmash, **12** I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down on me at Gilgal and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt obligated to offer the burnt offering.”

**13** Then Samuel said to Saul, “You have made a foolish choice! You have not obeyed the commandment that the LORD your God gave you. Had you done that, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever!

**14** But now your kingdom will not continue! The LORD has sought out for himself a man who is loyal to him and the LORD has appointed him to be leader over his people, for you have not obeyed what the LORD commanded you.”

**15** Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. Saul mustered the army that remained with him; there were about six hundred men. **16**

Saul, his son Jonathan, and the army that remained with them stayed in Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped in Micmash. **17**

Raiding bands went out from the camp of the Philistines in three groups. One band turned toward the road leading to Ophrah by the land of Shual; **18** another band turned toward the road leading to Beth Horon; and yet another band turned toward the road leading to the border that overlooks the valley of Zeboim in the direction of the desert.

**19** A blacksmith could not be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines had said, "This will prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears." **20** So all Israel had to go down to the Philistines in order to get their plowshares, cutting instruments, axes, and sickles sharpened. **21** They charged two-thirds of a shekel to sharpen plowshares and cutting instruments, and a third of a shekel to sharpen picks and axes, and to set ox goads. **22** So on the day of the battle no sword or spear was to be found in the hand of anyone in the army that was with Saul and Jonathan. No one but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

**23** A garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass at Micmash.

**1** Then one day Jonathan son of Saul said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the Philistine garrison that is opposite us." But he did not let his father know.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 14:1-52

### ***1 Samuel 14 - Victory Over the Philistines***

A. Jonathan's adventure in faith.

1. (1-3) Jonathan's proposal.

Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that *is* on the other side." But he did not tell his father. And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree

which *is* in Migron. The people who *were* with him *were* about six hundred men. Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

a. **It happened one day:** At the beginning, there was nothing in this day that indicated it would be a remarkable day. But it would! On this day, God would win a great victory through the bold trust of Jonathan.

i. "God is ever on the outlook for believing souls, who will receive his power and grace

on the one hand, and transmit them on the other. He chooses them, that by them he should make his mighty power

known." (Meyer <Expanded/Meyer.htm>) b. **Said to the**

**young man who bore his armor:** Every "officer" in the Israelite army had an "assistant" known as an *armor bearer*. The armor bearer would help the officer in fighting and administration of the army. They would often simply carry the armor and weapons of the officer, so they were known as *armor bearers*.

i. "Armor-bearers in ancient times had to be unusually brave and loyal, since the lives of their masters often depended on them." (Youngblood <Expanded/ebc.htm>) Later, God would raise up a special armor bearer for King Saul: a young man named David.

c. **Come, let us go over to the Philistines garrison:** The Israelites were in a military conflict where victory, from all outward appearance, was impossible. They were vastly outnumbered, and were greatly surpassed in military technology. Yet Jonathan is bold enough to **go over to the Philistine garrison** just to see what the LORD might want to do.

i. Jonathan probably was awake at night,

offended and outraged at the way these godless Philistines were oppressing the Israelites. He was mad at the way it seemed so hopeless and how the people were just waiting around, discouraged. As he lay awake that night, perhaps a thought suddenly came into his mind: " *Shamgar!* " Shamgar? Jonathan probably remember him from his Bible. After all, Jdg. 3:31 describes how Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with a sharp stick. Jonathan probably thought, "Well, if God could do it through Shamgar, He could do it through me!"

ii. As Jonathan thought about it more, he considered there was no way the LORD had forsaken Israel. Sure, the odds were great against them. But God was greater than the odds. God had promised to do great things for Israel. He promised that *Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.* (Lev. 26:8) He had won great victories against great odds before, as in the days of Gideon or Samson. God gave this land to Israel, not to the Philistines. God could do it! Why not now? Why not today? Why not through me?

iii. "This was a rash and foolish attempt, if it be examined by common rules; but not so, if we consider the singular promises made to the Israelites, that *one should chase a thousand*, [and so forth], and especially the heroical and extraordinary motions which were then frequently put into the minds of gallant men by God's Spirit, whereby they undertook and accomplished noble and wonderful things; as did Samson, and David,



and his worthies." (Poole <Expanded/biblio.htm>)

d. **He did not tell his father:** Why not? It may have been just an oversight, or something easily and properly explained. Or, it may have been that Jonathan *deliberately did not tell his father*, because he believed his father would have simply said "no."

e. **Saul was sitting:** What a contrast! The bold, brave, king is simply **sitting . . . under a pomegranate tree** while his son boldly goes **over to the Philistine garrison**. Saul is there, the priest with the **ephod** is there (as sort of an "army chaplain"). They sit back while Jonathan bravely trusts God.

f. The mention of **Ichabod** seems almost unnecessary. Why would we need to know that the priest with Saul, **Ahijah**, was the nephew of **Ichabod**? Probably, God wants us to associate the meaning of Ichabod's name with where Saul is at spiritually. Saul's royal glory is almost gone, and it is appropriate that he associates with a relative of "The Glory Has Departed."

g. **The people did not know that Jonathan was gone:** This indicates that Jonathan did not **go over to the Philistine garrison** out of a desire for personal glory. If that was his motivation, he would have told at least a few people that he had gone over.

2. (4-5) Jonathan finds a strategic position.

Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah.

a. **Between the passes . . . there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock**

**on the other side:** On his way to the Philistine garrison, Jonathan sees something that any military man would

notice. He sees a strategic position - a narrow path through a pass, with large, sharp rocks on either side. A few men could easily fight against a much larger number at this strategic place.

b. If Jonathan would have never decided, *Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side* (1Sa. 14:1) he would have never found this strategic place. God guided Jonathan as Jonathan was boldly trusting God, and acting on that bold trust.

3. (6-7) Jonathan's bold proposal.

Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." So his armorbearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart."

**a. It may be that the LORD will work for**

**us:** For Jonathan, this was more than a reconnaissance expedition. He wanted to see what God could do through two men who would trust him and step out boldly.

i. *Jonathan knew the need was great.* Israel was already hopelessly outnumbered and demoralized.

ii. *Jonathan knew God wanted to use someone.* His father, King Saul, just wanted to sit under a pomegranate tree. Something had to be done, and Jonathan was willing to be used by God to do it.

iii. *Jonathan knew God wanted to work with someone.* Jonathan could have just *prayed* that God would rain down fire from heaven on the Philistines. But Jonathan knew that God uses the bold action and fighting spirit of His people. "It was not Jonathan that was to work with some help from God; it was the Lord that was to work by Jonathan." (Blaikie

<Expanded/biblio.htm>)

**b. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few:**

What wise courage in God! Many in Israel probably believed this as a theological truth. But few believed it enough to *do something*. Jonathan's faith was demonstrated by his works.

**i. Nothing restrains the LORD!** Do we really believe it? Or does the title of J.B.

Phillips' book describe us: *Your God is Too Small*. We often feel that God is restrained in one way or another. In reality, the only thing that could be said to restrain God is our *unbelief*. In Mat. 13:58, it says of one time in Jesus' ministry, *He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief*. God's *power* is never restrained, but His *will* may be restrained by our unbelief. He may choose not to act until we partner with Him in trust. God had a trusting partner in Jonathan!

**ii. By many or few:** What did it matter?

Who cares about the odds or the point spread when God is on your side? The odds were already against Israel. Did it matter if it was a million-to-one or a thousand-to-one?

Numbers or odds did not restrain God, but unbelief could. Jonathan never read the New Testament, but he had a Rom. 8:31 heart: *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

**iii.** Notice where Jonathan had the emphasis.

He had little faith in himself, but great faith in God. It wasn't "I can win a great victory with God's help." It was "God can win a great victory through even me." As Meyer says, "He had the smallest possible faith in himself, and the greatest faith in God. His soul waited for the Lord; in Him was centred all his hope, and from his gracious help he expected great things. All he aspired to was to be humble vehicle through which the

delivering grace of God might work."

c. **Go then; here I am with you:** These words from Jonathan's armor bearer must have cheered Jonathan greatly. When we step out in faith, encouragement can make all the difference for good. And discouragement can make all the difference for evil!

i. God was going to use Jonathan, but He wasn't going to use Jonathan *alone*. Almost always, when God uses a man, he calls others around that man to support and help him. They are just as important in getting God's work done as the man God uses. So, if you can't be a Jonathan, then find a Jonathan - and attach yourself to him as like Jonathan's armor bearer.

4. (8-10) Jonathan proposes a test.

Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to *these* men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this *will be* a sign to us."

a. **Very well:** This indicates that Jonathan took the support of his armor bearer as confirmation.

b. **This will be a sign to us:** In his step of faith, Jonathan wants to know he is really being led by God. So he proposes a test: they will show themselves to the Philistine guards. If they respond one way ("**Come up to us**" ) Jonathan will know God wants them to fight and win the battle. If the guards respond another way ("**Wait until we come to you**" ) Jonathan will know God does not want them to fight this day.

c. Jonathan is showing wisdom, not unbelief. To this point, he is not acting on a specific, confirmed word from God. Instead, he is

following the bold hope and impression of his heart. He is humble enough to know his heart might be wrong on this day, so Jonathan asks God to guide him.

i. This is not the same as Gideon's setting of a fleece (Jdg. 6:36-40). Gideon had a confirmed word of God to guide him, and he doubted God's word. Jonathan was not doubting God's word, he was doubting his own heart and mind.

ii. Jonathan is prompted by *faith*.

Significantly, he does not demand to know the whole battle plan from God in advance.

He is willing to take it one step at a time, and let God plan it out. Faith is willing to let God know the whole plan and know our part one step at a time.

5. (11-14) Jonathan and his armor bearer attack the Philistines.

So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden." Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armorbearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel." And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them. That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land.

a. **Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden:** At this time of crisis, the Israelites were hiding anywhere they could (1Sa. 13:6). It was

reasonable for the Philistines to think these were Hebrew deserters surrendering to the Philistines because they thought it was better than hiding in a hole!

**b. Jonathan said to his armorbearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD had delivered them into the hand of Israel."**

What an exciting moment this must have been for Jonathan! His bold trust in God had been confirmed by a sign, and now he knew God was going to do something great.

**c. Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him:** This was a difficult climb. Jonathan was not the kind to say, "Well, it would be nice to do this. But the rocks are steep and there are a lot of Philistines up there. Let's just pray instead." No; he got down on his hands and knees and climbed! If we only want victory, or want to be used by God when it is *easy*, we won't see much victory and we won't be used very much.

**d. And they fell before Jonathan:** Jonathan knew that the battle was the LORD's, yet he knew God would use him to fight. When

Jonathan saw God's confirming sign, he didn't lay down his sword and start praying that God would strike them all down. He prayed, made sure his sword was sharp, and trusted that God would use him to strike them all down!

**e. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them:** "Jonathan knocked them down, and the armour-bearer despatched them." (Clarke <Expanded/Clarke.htm>) 6. (15) God attacks the Philistines.

And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling.

**a. There was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people:** It seems that the Philistines, under a divine confusion, instantly awoke that early morning with the thought "We are attacked by enemies in our midst!" Then rushing about, they thought their fellow Philistines might be the enemy, so they began to fight one another, and kill one another!

i. It didn't matter if the Philistines greatly outnumbered the Israelites, and had far

better weapons. God was more than able to set the Philistines against each other. If the Israelites had no swords, the LORD would

use the swords of the Philistines against the Philistines!

ii. "It is not strange if the Philistines were both astonished and intimidated; God also

struck them with a panic terror; and withal,

infatuated their minds, and possibly put an

evil spirit among them, which in this

universal confusion made them conceive

that there was treachery amongst

themselves, and therefore caused them to

sheath their swords in one another's bowels,

as appears from verses 16 and 20." (Poole

<Expanded/biblio.htm>)

iii. "Possibly God blinded their eyes or their minds, that they

could not distinguish friends from foes. Compare Jdg. 7:22;

2Ki. 6:18; 2Ch. 20:23." (Poole <Expanded/biblio.htm>)

"But God, where he pleaseth, can easily

trouble the fantasy, and make men to

mistake; as we see daily in melancholy

persons, who looking through a black cloud,

as it were, see all things black, dark, cross and hurtful."

(Trapp <Expanded/Trapp.

htm>)

iv. Trapp's comment on this section seems

good, if I could only understand it: "As anyone was in their way, they knocked him

down: being smitten with such a *scotama* or *acrisis*, a giddiness of the brain, or blindness of judgment, that they knew not their friends from their foes in that distemper and hurrycomb." What on earth is a *hurrycomb*?

b. **The earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling:** Jonathan and his armor bearer had done their part. Now God was doing his part. Jonathan could use his heart and his sword, and he did. But what Jonathan could not do - send a great earthquake to terrify the Philistines - God did. Often we wait around for God to do what we can do. But God will often

do miracles - what He alone can do - if we will do what we can do.

c. The **very great trembling** must have terrified the Philistines. But it would have comforted Jonathan and his armor bearer. They would have been confirmed in their confidence in such a great God.

7. (16-19) Saul learns of the battle.

Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and *there* was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there. Then Saul said to the people who *were* with him, "Now call the roll and see who has gone from us." And when they had called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armorbearer *were* not *there*.

And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here" (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel). Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which *was* in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."

a. **There was the multitude, melting away:** Imagine how this must have looked to the watchmen of Israel! They were keeping an eye

on the huge army of the Philistines, and the army starts to melt away before their eyes.



b. **Call the roll:** Why? Did it matter? What Saul should have done was go and fight the Philistines at this strategic moment. Instead, he was probably worried about who was leading

the battle, and who would get the credit.

c. **Bring the ark of God here:** Why? What for? Saul is probably trying to look spiritual here, but what did he need to seek God about?

There is a time to go aside and pray, and there is a time to get your sword out and fight. Saul didn't know what time it was!

d. **While Saul talked to the priest . . . the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."**

It is strange that at this moment, Saul would not know what to do. His insecurity and fear

and self-focus have paralyzed him. It was time to fight. But eventually, the noise of God and Jonathan fighting against the Philistines becomes so loud, that Saul knows he has to fight to. So, he tells the priest **"Withdraw your hand."** This means, "Stop seeking and answer from God with the urim and thummin," which were held in a pouch in the priest's breastplate.

i. Trapp calls Saul's words here "Words of profane impiety . . . it is now no time to

consult with God, for we know well enough what we have to do, and will take our opportunity."

8. (20-23) Saul fights in the battle and a great victory is won.

Then Saul and all the people who *were* with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his

neighbor, *and there was* very great confusion.

Moreover the Hebrews *who* were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp *from the* surrounding *country*, they also joined the Israelites who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle. So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.

a. **They went to the battle:** It has taken a long time for Saul, the leader of Israel, to start leading. Now he is following God and Jonathan into battle.

i. Why was Saul just *sitting . . . under a pomegranate tree* when Jonathan was boldly trusting God for the victory? Probably Saul's insecurity had made him so afraid to fail that he didn't want to do anything. Now he will only go into battle because it seems like a

"sure thing." We are far from a bold trust in God when we will only do what seems to be

a "sure thing." Go out and do something bold. If you fail, and God wasn't really with it the way you thought He would be, then you still have tried. The armchair quarterbacks

and back seat drivers have nothing to say to you!

ii. These were the *hold-backs*, who were out there to fight the Philistines, but didn't enter the battle until the odds were in their favor.

Better to come out then than never, but how much better to have the bold trust of a Jonathan!

b. **Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time . . . also joined the Israelites:** It seems that many in Israel had the insecure heart of Saul. These Hebrew deserters to the Philistines probably

hated their masters, but were afraid to stand free in the LORD. They would only come out for Israel when victory was

assured.

i. These were the *sell-outs*, who had forsaken Israel and supported the Philistines when it seemed Israel was a "loser" and the Philistines were the "winners." Better to come out then than never, but how much better to have the bold trust of a Jonathan!

c. **Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim . . . they also followed hard after them in the**

**battle:** Others in Israel, when the Philistine oppression became severe, simply fled (1Sa.

13:6-7). They were afraid to come out for Israel when things were bad, but now that victory seems assured they will join in the battle.

i. These were the *hide-outs*, who had left the scene of battle and stood on the sidelines until it seemed "safe." They would not stand for the LORD until the odds seemed to be in their favor. Better to come out then than never, but how much better to have the bold trust of a Jonathan!

c. **So the LORD saved Israel that day:** God really used Jonathan, but it wasn't Jonathan's victory. It was the LORD's victory. God was just waiting for someone with the bold trust of Jonathan!

i. Josephus says there were 6,000 Philistines killed in this rout. And all groups of people had a hand in the victory - the *hold-backs*, the *sell-outs*, and the *hide-outs*. But there was no doubt who led the battle: the *boldly trusting* Jonathan. Which of these groups of people are you most like?

d. God wins the same kind of victories today. In fact, one military man read this account and used Jonathan's exact strategy to win an important battle. Here is the story from Major Vivian Gilbert, a British Army Officer:

In the First World War a brigade major in

Allenby's army in Palestine was on one occasion searching his Bible with the light of a candle, looking for a certain name. His brigade had received orders to take a village that stood on a rocky prominence on the other side of a deep valley. It was called Michmash and the name seemed somehow familiar. Eventually he found it in 1 Samuel 13 and read there: "And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin but the Philistines encamped in Michmash." It then went on to tell how Jonathan and his armour-bearer crossed over during the night "to the Philistines' garrison" on the other side, and how they passed two sharp rocks: "there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez and the name of the other Seneh." They clambered up the cliff and overpowered the garrison, "within as it were a half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough." The main body of the enemy awakened by the melee thought they were surrounded by Saul's troops and "melted away and they went on beating down one another." Thereupon Saul attacked with his whole force and beat the enemy. "So the Lord saved Israel that day."

The brigade major reflected that there must still be this narrow passage through the rocks, between two spurs, and at the end of it the "half acre of land." He woke the commander and there read the passage through together once more. Patrols were sent out. They found the pass, which was thinly held by the Turks, and which led past two jagged rocks - obviously Bozez and Seneh. Up on top, beside Michmash, they could see by the light of the moon a small flat field. The brigadier altered his plan of attack. Instead of deploying the whole brigade he sent one company through the pass under cover of darkness. The few Turks whom they

met were overpowered without a sound, the cliffs were scaled, and shortly before daybreak the company had taken up a position on "the half acre of land."

The Turks woke up and took to their heels in disorder since they thought they were being surrounded by Allenby's army. They were all killed or taken prisoner. And so, after thousands of years British troops successfully copied the tactics of Saul and Jonathan. (Keller, *The Bible As History*, pages 179-180) B. Saul's foolish oath and its consequences.

1. (24) Saul compels the army of Israel under an oath.

And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, "Cursed *is* the man who eats *any* food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food.

a. **Saul had placed the people under an**

**oath:** Jonathan, in his bold trust in the LORD, had just struck a mighty blow against the Philistines. God had totally routed and confused the Philistine army. Now it was the job of the army of Israel, under King Saul, to finish the job by striking down the fleeing Philistine army. And on this day of battle against the Philistines, Saul declared a curse. "**Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.**"

i. On the surface, this sounds *so spiritual*.

"Let's set today aside as a special day of fasting unto the LORD. We want God to do a great work, so we should fast today. And I should enforce this among the whole army with a curse." What could be wrong with that?

b. *It was wrong because Saul's focus was*

*wrong*. Notice his focus: **before I have taken vengeance on my enemies**. Saul, don't put the army of Israel under an oath so that *you* can take vengeance on *your* enemies. If

that is how you regard this battle, then just fast yourself! Saul shows that even in the midst of doing something spiritual like fasting, his focus is on *himself*, not the LORD.

i. Saul's desire is not the glory of God. It is the glory of Saul. He was not the first one, nor the last one, to command "religious" or "spiritual" acts for his own glory, not the glory of God. The focus here is not on the LORD, or on the LORD's victory, but on Saul's commanded fast.

c. *It was wrong because Saul's motive was wrong.* It is possible that Saul genuinely did something he thought would please God, but this is unlikely. It is more probable to see two darker motives behind Saul's curse.

i. He may have been acting out of a *false spirituality*. Before, when he first learned that the Philistine army was *melting away*, he "acted spiritual" by calling for the priest to bring the Ark of the Covenant and inquiring of God through the priest (1Sa.

14:16-19).

ii. Or, Saul may have been acting out of *insecurity*, doing this to draw the focus on himself. Saul had been concerned with just who it was leading this attack (1Sa. 14:17),

because he knew the army and the nation would cherish this person as a hero. Now, through this curse, he puts the focus back on himself. That day, no one would be thinking much about Jonathan, because their hunger would always remind them of Saul's curse.

d. *It was wrong because Saul's sense of authority was wrong.* **Cursed is the man.** Says who, Saul? Since when did you have the authority to proclaim such a curse? Are you now the spiritual leader of the nation? If any such fast was to be declared, and curse attached to it, the

prophet Samuel had the spiritual authority to do it, not king Saul.

e. *It was wrong because Saul's promised punishment was wrong. **Cursed is the man.***

That's a little heavy handed, don't you think? If Saul wanted to call for a voluntary fast, that was one thing. He might have said, "I'm fasting today before the LORD. I will not eat **any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.** If anyone wants to join me, they are welcome." But instead of leading by example and inviting the army of Israel to follow, he **placed the people under an oath.**

i. This in itself has a bad taste to it. We can imagine Saul standing before the whole army of Israel, and saying, "All right everyone. Raise your right hand and swear an oath before God" and then leading them in this forced, manipulated promise. Saul had probably left that assembly of the army thinking he had really done something ("What a great promise they all made!"). He had really done something all right; he had done something really bad. It is always wrong to place someone else under a promise or **under an oath.** If it isn't on their heart to put *themselves* under the oath, it doesn't do any good to force them under it.

f. *It was wrong because Saul's timing was wrong.* The day of decisive battle is not the day to command the troops that they do not eat.

They need the energy, and they need the focus on the job at hand. They don't need the discouragement and the distraction of a forced fast. It was more important to achieve a complete victory over the Philistines that day. It's not that there was anything wrong with

fasting itself, but that it wasn't the right time. It was *Saul's* day to fast, not the LORD's day to fast.

g. *It was wrong because the result among the army of Israel was wrong.* No matter what Saul's motive was, it was a foolish thing to do.

On this day of battle when the morale of Israel should have been the highest, and when the physical energy of Israel should have the

strongest, instead **the men of Israel were distressed that day**. Because **none of the people tasted food**, the army was weak and discouraged on a day when they should have been strong and excited.

2. (25-30) Jonathan unknowingly breaks the oath and is told of his offense.

Now all *the people* of the land came to a forest; and there was honey on the ground. And when the people had come into the woods, there was the honey, dripping; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that *was* in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened. Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed *is* the man who eats food this day.' " And the people were faint. But Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?"

a. **There was honey on the ground:** This was provision from God! The Israeli army was hot on the pursuit of the fleeing Philistines.

They were all tired and hungry. They needed



energy to continue the pursuit and finish the battle. And here is **honey on the ground!**

i. "There were many wild bees in that country, and Judea is expressly said to be a land flowing with milk and *honey*." (Clarke <Expanded/Clarke.htm>)

ii. They really did need the energy. "The mopping-up operations after a rout were all-important if the maximum benefit from the victory was to be reaped, but pursuit of the enemy involved an exhausting, unrelenting journey over steep hills for hours on end." (Baldwin <Expanded/Baldwin.htm>) iii. A taste of that honey would have given the soldiers the kind of sugar-rush energy they needed to carry on the battle.

b. **No one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath:** This group of soldiers all saw the honey. It was **dripping**, right in front of their eyes. Yet Saul's foolish oath prevented them from receiving what God had put right in front of them!

i. This must have been *torture* for the soldiers. **And there was the honey, dripping.** Right in front of their eyes! They *want* the honey. They *need* the honey. God *provided* the honey. But a foolish, legalistic command from Saul kept it from them. How this must have discouraged and embittered the soldiers!

c. **But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath:** Jonathan ate some of that honey! Immediately, it did the weary soldier well: **his countenance brightened.** He needed the energy to fight, and here it was, provided by God.

i. We may wonder at what exactly is meant by **Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath.** Did this mean that Jonathan *did not know* of the oath? Or, did he *hear of* the oath from others, but say to himself, "Well, since

I wasn't there, my father never charged *me* with this oath. I never heard him say any such thing."

d. **My father has troubled the land:** Perhaps Jonathan should not have said this. There was a sense in which he was undercutting his father's authority before the troops here. If there were anything to say, it would have been best to say it to his father directly. However, despite all that, *Jonathan was exactly right!*

i. King Saul had indeed **troubled the land** with his pseudo-spiritual command to fast.

Because of his command, **the people were faint** on a day when they should have been strong. They were weak and distracted. The victory could have been greater if the people could have eaten!

ii. You really can't say it better than Jonathan did: **How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?** (1Sa. 14:30)

3. (31-35) The soldiers of Israel sin because of Saul's foolish command.

Now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. So the people were very faint. And the people rushed on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered *them* on the ground; and the people ate *them* with the blood. Then they told Saul, saying, "Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood!" So he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone to me this day." And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, 'Bring me here every man's ox and every man's sheep,

slaughter *them* here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night, and slaughtered *it* there. Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

a. **The people rushed on the spoil . . . and the people ate them with the blood.** God specifically commanded Israel that they should always properly drain the blood from an animal before they butchered it.

i. Deu. 12:23-25 is one place where God commanded this: *Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.* Since the blood was the picture of life in any animal or man ( *for the blood is the life*), God would not allow Israel to eat meat that had not been properly bled.

Instead, it was to be given to God by pouring it out on the earth. Life belongs to God, not man, and this was a way to declare that.

b. On this day of battle, because of Saul's foolish command, the people were so hungry they broke this command. Their obedience to *Saul's foolish command* led them to disobey *God's clearly declared command*. This is always the result of legalism!

i. Jesus said it plainly to the legalists of His day: *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men . . . All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.* (Mar. 7:8)

ii. We often think that legalistic rules will keep people from sin. Actually, the opposite is true. Legalistic rules lead us into sin,

because they either provoke our rebellion, or they lead us into legalistic pride.

iii. Paul said it powerfully in Col. 2:23: *These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false*

*humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

c. **You have dealt treacherously:** Saul is blaming the people for what is really his own fault. He should have never made such a foolish commandment, and his commandment provoked the people into sin. But in his pride, insecurity, and foolishness, Saul set the people up to sin.

i. Of course, this does not excuse the sin of the people. They are accountable for their

own sin before God. Yet Saul is also

accountable. Jesus referred to this principle when He said, *For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!* (Mat. 18:7)

d. **Slaughter them here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood:**

Saul set up a stone to properly butcher the animals, and also **built an altar to the LORD**. At least Saul is doing some of what is right after he had done what was wrong.

4. (36-39) In response to God's silence, Saul makes another foolish oath.

Now Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light; and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." Then the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." So Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him that day. And Saul said, "Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. For as the LORD

lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not a man among all the people answered him.

a. **So Saul asked counsel of God:** This was good. Saul should have sought the **counsel of God**. We shouldn't think that *everything* Saul did was bad before the LORD.

b. **He did not answer him that day:** Saul inquired of the LORD through the priest. It is likely that the priest used the *Urim and Thummim* to inquire of the LORD.

i. The use of the discerning tools of *Urim and Thummim* is described on a few occasions (Exo. 28:30, Num. 27:21, 1Sa. 28:6; Ezr. 2:63, Neh. 7:65) and their use may be implied in other passages (Jdg. 1:1; 20:18, 23).

ii. The names *Urim and Thummim* mean "Lights and Perfections." We aren't sure what they were or how they were used.

Most think they were a pair of stones, one light and another dark, and each stone indicated a "yes" or "no" from God. The High Priest would ask God a question, reach into the breastplate, and pull out either a "yes" or a "no."

iii. On this occasion, the priest would probably start inquiring of the LORD with this question: "LORD, do you want to speak to us today?" Because we are told **He did not answer him that day**, probably when this question was asked, the stone that indicated "no" kept being drawn out.

iv. Many would consider the *Urim and Thummim* as crude tools of discernment. In fact, they are better than the tools many Christians use today. It would be better to

use the *Urim and Thummim* than rely on feelings, or outward appearances, or to simply use no discernment!

c. Why did the LORD **not answer him that**

**day?** Saul was convinced the problem was that some violated his commanded oath. When he said, **know and see what this sin was**

**today**, he was convinced the sin was *among the people* instead of in himself.

d. Saul was *so sure* of being right he pronounced another oath: **For as the LORD**

**lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.**

i. Of course, if Saul *knew* that it was Jonathan who had violated his oath, he would never have said this. But he was so

caught up in being right, that he adds this foolish vow to his previous foolish commandment.

ii. Saul was very good at making religious oaths and promises. But that didn't mean very much, because he was not good at having a heart after God, and he was not good at keeping the oaths he made.

iii. "Strange perverseness! He who was so indulgent as to spare wicked Agag, chapter

15, is now so severe as to destroy his own worthy son: he that could easily dispense with God's righteous and reasonable command, will not bear the violation of his own rash and foolish command; because his own authority and power is concerned in this, and only God's in the other." (Poole <Expanded/biblio.htm>)

**e. Not a man among all the people**

**answered him:** The people knew that Jonathan had eaten of the honey, and Saul's sentence of death on anyone who had eaten must have sent a chill up their back. All the people loved and respected Jonathan, and they knew that Saul was in the

wrong. But no one wanted to answer Saul!

5. (40-44) Jonathan is implicated by the casting of lots.

Then he said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, "Give a perfect *lot*." So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. And Saul said, "Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me." So Jonathan was taken.

Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, and said, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in my hand. So now I must die!" And Saul answered, "God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan."

a. **Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped:** Saul wanted to find the wrong doer by the casting of lots. They would separate people into two groups, then select one group by a "low" or "high" roll of something like dice. You would continue to narrow the selected group until you found your man. First, Saul wants everyone to know that he and his son Jonathan are innocent, so that is the first division. Imagine Saul's shock when the lot indicates that he and Jonathan are the guilty group!

b. **So Jonathan was taken:** This must have shaken Saul. He had pronounced a death sentence on whoever ate in violation of his forced vow. And Saul, instead of admitting that his commandment and his death sentence were foolish, hardens in his foolishness, and declares

**"God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan."**

i. Saul was willing to kill his son rather than to humbly admit that *he* is really at fault.

Saul started out as a humble man (1Sa. 10:21), but his once impressive humility is

being overtaken by pride. "But he that maketh so much ado about eating with the blood, makes nothing of spilling the blood of innocent Jonathan, and of swearing bloody oaths at the same time . . . Saul seemeth to have been a very great swearer, rapping out oath upon oath, which belike he thought he might do by authority." (Trapp <Expanded/Trapp.htm>)

c. Why did God allow the lot to pick out Jonathan? "Not in answer to Saul's prayers, which God valued not. But, (1.) To show that he is the dispenser of lots; (2.) To humble Jonathan, who was in danger of being puffed up too much with the joy of his victory; (3.) To discover Saul's hypocrisy." (Trapp <Expanded/Trapp.htm>)

i. "The holy oracle told the truth, but neither that oracle nor the God who gave it fixed any blame upon Jonathan, and his own conscience acquits him. He seeks not pardon from God, because he is conscious he had not transgressed." (Clarke <Expanded/Clarke.htm>)

ii. **Perfect lot** in the Hebrew is very close to the word for *Thummim*. They no doubt used the *Urim and Thummim* as the way to cast the lot.

6. (45-46) The people rescue Jonathan from execution.

But the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die. Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

a. **Certainly not! As the LORD lives, not**



**one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this**

**day:** Happily, the people finally stand up to Saul's foolishness. They simply will not allow Jonathan to be executed. They knew that Jonathan was working *for* the LORD that day, not *against* the LORD.

b. Was this right? Should Jonathan have been executed? No; he should *not* have been executed for three reasons. First, the oath itself and the pronouncement of the death penalty on the oath breaker were simply bad and foolish laws, and should not have been enforced.

Second, Jonathan broke the oath in ignorance.

Finally, God's approval was evident from His great blessing upon Jonathan (**he has worked with God today**).

i. Which had more to do with the victory won that day? Was it Saul's foolish regulation or Jonathan's bold faith in God?

**c. And the Philistines went to their own**

**place:** The implication in this phrase is that the victory might have been much greater if not for Saul's foolish oath.

7. (47-52) Saul's many wars and his family.

So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed *them*. And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui and

Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters *were these*: the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. The name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army *was* Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

Kish *was* the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel. Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.

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a. **So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel:**

This last passage in the chapter is all about *Saul's strength*. And Saul was strong. He **established his sovereignty over Israel**. He fought many successful wars. He had a large and influential family. And the strength of his army grew (**when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for**

**himself**). Saul's strength was broad over many areas.

i. "Ishbosheth, Saul's other son, is here omitted, because he intended to mention

only those of his sons who went with him into the battles here mentioned, and who were afterwards slain with him." (Poole <Expanded/biblio.htm>)

b. Yet, if his strength was broad, it was shallow.

Because Saul was not a man after God's own heart, because his own relationship with God was more about image than substance, his kingdom cannot last. The weakness of Saul has been seen here and there; but in the next chapter it will be fully exposed.

i. "Saul alone was to blame. He had not only missed the greatest opportunity of his life, but he was already enwrapping himself in the unbelief, the jealousy, and moroseness of temper in which his sun was to be enshrouded while it was yet day." (Meyer <Expanded/Meyer.htm>)

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Now Saul was sitting under a pomegranate tree in Migron, on the outskirts of Gibeah. The

army that was with him numbered about six hundred men. **3** Now Ahijah was carrying an ephod. He was the son of Ahitub, who was the brother of Ichabod and a son of Phineas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh. The army was unaware that Jonathan had left.

**4** Now there was a steep cliff on each side of the pass through which Jonathan intended to go to reach the Philistine garrison. One cliff was named Bozez, the other Seneh. **5** The cliff to the north was closer to Micmash, the one to the south closer to Geba.

**6** Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will intervene for us. Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few." **7**

His armor bearer said to him, "Do everything that is on your mind. Do as you're inclined. I'm with you all the way!"

**8** Jonathan replied, "All right! We'll go over to these men and fight them. **9** If they say to us, 'Stay put until we approach you,' we will stay right there and not go up to them. **10** But if they say, 'Come up against us,' we will go up. For in that case the LORD has given them into our hand – it will be a sign to us."

**11** When they made themselves known to the Philistine garrison, the Philistines said, "Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes in which they hid themselves." **12**

Then the men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armor bearer, "Come on up to us so we can teach you a thing or two!" Then Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up behind me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel!"

**13** Jonathan crawled up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer following behind him. Jonathan struck down the Philistines, while his armor bearer came along behind him and killed them. **14** In this initial skirmish Jonathan and his armor bearer struck down about twenty men in an area that measured half an acre.

**15** Then fear overwhelmed those who were in the camp, those who were in the field, all the army in the garrison, and the raiding bands. They trembled and the ground shook. This fear was caused by God.

**16** Saul's watchmen at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin looked on as the crowd of soldiers seemed to melt away first in one direction and then in another. **17** So Saul said to the army that was with him, "Mustering the troops and see who is no longer with us." When they mustered the troops, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there. **18** So Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring near the ephod," for he was at that time wearing the ephod. **19**

While Saul spoke to the priest, the panic in the Philistines' camp was becoming greater and greater. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand!"

**20** Saul and all the army that was with him assembled and marched into battle, where they found the Philistines in total panic killing one another with their swords. **21** The Hebrews who had earlier gone over to the Philistine side joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. **22**

When all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, they too pursued them in battle. **23** So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle shifted over to Beth Aven.

**24** Now the men of Israel were hard pressed that day, for Saul had made the army agree to this oath: "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening! I will get my vengeance on my enemies!" So no one in the army ate anything.

**25** Now the whole army entered the forest and there was honey on the ground. **26** When the army entered the forest,

they saw the honey flowing, but no one ate any of it, for the army was afraid of the oath. **27** But Jonathan had not heard about the oath his father had made the army take. He extended the end of his staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb. When he ate it, his eyes gleamed. **28** Then someone from the army informed him, "Your father put the army under a strict oath saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today!' That is why the army is tired." **29** Then Jonathan said, "My father has caused trouble for the land. See how my eyes gleamed when I tasted just a little of this honey. **30** Certainly if the army had eaten some of the enemies' provisions that they came across today, would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater?"

**31** On that day the army struck down the Philistines from Micmash to Aijalon, and they became very tired. **32**

So the army rushed greedily on the plunder, confiscating sheep, cattle, and calves. They slaughtered them right on the ground, and the army ate them blood and all.

**33** Now it was reported to Saul, "Look, the army is sinning against the LORD by eating even the blood." He said, "All of you have broken the covenant! Roll a large stone over here to me." **34** Then Saul said, "Scatter out among the army and say to them, 'Each of you bring to me your ox and sheep and slaughter them in this spot and eat. But don't sin against the LORD by eating the blood.'"

So that night each one brought his ox and slaughtered it there. **35** Then Saul built an altar for the LORD; it was the first time he had built an altar for the LORD.

**36** Saul said, "Let's go down after the Philistines at night; we will rout them until the break of day. We won't leave any of them alive!" They replied, "Do whatever seems best to you." But the priest said, "Let's approach God here." **37** So Saul asked God, "Should I go down after the Philistines? Will you deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day.

**38** Then Saul said, "All you leaders of the army come here. Find out how this sin occurred today. **39** For as surely as the LORD, the deliverer of Israel, lives, even if it turns out to be my own son Jonathan, he will certainly die!" But no one from the army said anything.

**40** Then he said to all Israel, "You will be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The army replied to Saul, "Do whatever you think is best."

**41** Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel! If this sin has been committed by me or by my son Jonathan, then, O LORD God of Israel, respond with Urim. But if this sin has been committed by your people Israel, respond with Thummim." Then Jonathan and Saul were indicated by lot, while the army was exonerated. **42** Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan!" Jonathan was indicated by lot.

**43** So Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I used the end of the staff that was in my hand to taste a little honey. I must die!" **44** Saul said, "God will punish me severely if Jonathan doesn't die!"

**45** But the army said to Saul, "Should Jonathan, who won this great victory in Israel, die? May it never be! As surely as the LORD lives, not a single hair of his head will fall to the ground! For it is with the help of God that he has acted today." So the army rescued Jonathan from death.

**46** Then Saul stopped chasing the Philistines, and the Philistines went back home. **47** After Saul had secured his royal position over Israel, he fought against all their enemies on all sides – the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. In every direction that he turned he was victorious. **48** He fought bravely, striking down the Amalekites and delivering Israel from the hand of its enemies.

**49** The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-Shua. He had two daughters; the older one was named Merab and the younger Michal. **50** The name of Saul's wife was

Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the general in command of his army was Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

**51** Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

**52** There was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. So whenever Saul saw anyone who was a warrior or a brave individual, he would conscript him.

**1** Then Samuel said to Saul, "I was the one the LORD sent to anoint you as king over his people Israel. Now listen to what the LORD says.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 15:1-35

### ***1 Samuel 15 - God Rejects Saul as King***

A. Battle against the Amalekites.

1. (1-3) A clear, radical command: destroy Amalek.

Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

a. **Samuel also said to Saul:** This was a message from the spiritual leader of Israel to the political and military leader of Israel. The message was clear: **punish what Amalek did to Israel . . . go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them.**

i. The judgment Israel was to bring against Amalek was frighteningly complete: **Kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.** God clearly told Samuel to tell Saul to bring a total judgment against the Amalekites.

ii. **Utterly destroy:** This Hebrew verb

( *heherim*) is used seven times in this account. The idea of total, complete judgment is certainly stressed.

b. Why? What did the Amalekites do that was so bad? Samuel explained that to Saul also: **how he laid wait for him on the way when he came up from Egypt.** Centuries before this, the Amalekites were the first peoples to attack Israel after their escape from Egypt (Exodus 17).

i. Hundreds of years before, the LORD said  
He would bring this kind of judgment against

Amalek: *Then the LORD said to Moses,*

*"Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exo. 17:14-16)*

ii. Deu. 25:17-19 repeats the point:

*Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore, it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*

*You shall not forget.*

iii. The Amalekites committed a terrible sin against Israel. When the nation was weak and vulnerable, the Amalekites attacked the weakest and most vulnerable of the nation

( *attacked your rear ranks, all the strangers at your rear, when you were tired and weary*). They did this with no provocation, no reason except violence and greed. God hates it when the strong take cruel



advantage over the weak, especially when the weak are His people. So God promised to bring judgment against the Amalekites.

iv. But all this had happened more than four hundred years before! Why did God hold it against the Amalekites? This shows us an important principle: *time does not erase sin before God*. Before man, time should erase sin. The years should make us forgiving to one another. But before God, time cannot atone for sin. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can erase sin, not time. In fact, the time was time that the Amalekites were mercifully given opportunity to repent. And they did not repent! The hundreds of years of hardened unrepentant hearts made them *more* guilty, not less guilty! "Though it be four hundred years since, and I may seem to have forgotten it. It is ill angering the

Ancient of Days; his forbearance is no quittance." (Trapp)

v. "Nothing could justify such an exterminating decree but the absolute authority of God. This was given: all the reasons of it we do not know; but this we know well, *The Judge of all the earth doth right*. This war was not for *plunder*, for God commanded that all the *property* as well as the *people* should be destroyed." (Clarke) c. If God wanted to judge the Amalekites, why didn't He just do it Himself? He completely destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

without any help from man. Why not just do the same here?

i. But God had a special purpose in this for His special nation, Israel. He wanted it to be a test of obedience for Saul, and all of Israel. Plus, since Amalek's sin against Israel was a military attack, God wanted to make the judgment fit the sin.

d. Would God call His people today to fight such a war of judgment? Many today are afraid that this is the real agenda of the "religious right,"

and they imagine that they want to rule the world according to the Bible, and at the end of a gun. But God has a completely different call for Christians under the New Covenant than He did for Israel under the Old Covenant.

i. Jesus made it clear that He was establishing a spiritual kingdom, not a political or a military kingdom. Jesus said in Joh. 18:36: *My kingdom is not of this world.*

*If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.* Paul made it clear that the enemies of the church were not material, but spiritual: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* (Eph.

6:12) Through the centuries, whenever the church has tried to rule the world politically or militarily, it has run into enormous trouble. We want to win the world for Jesus Christ, but we want to do it through the influence of individual lives, transformed one at a time by the spiritual power of Jesus Christ.

e. Though God no longer calls His people to take up arms as instruments of His judgment, it does not mean that God has stopped judging the nations. "But we cannot suppose, for a single moment, that the judgment of the nations is to be altogether relegated to that final day. Throughout the history of the world the nations have been standing before Christ's bar.

Nineveh stood there, Babylon stood there, Greece and Rome stood there, Spain and France stood there, and Great Britain is standing there to-day. One after another has had the solemn word - *depart*, and they have passed into a destruction which has been absolute and terrible." (Meyer)

2. (4-6) Saul prepares for the attack on the Amalekites.

So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.

And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley. Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the

Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

a. **So Saul gathered the people together**

**and numbered them:** Saul was certainly a capable military leader. He shows he has the ability to gather and organize a large army. He also knew how to time his attack properly; he **lay in wait in the valley**.

b. **Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart"** : Here, Saul shows wisdom and mercy in letting the Kenites go. God's judgment was not upon

them, so he did not want to destroy them with the Amalekites.

i. "And when the Kenites pack up their fardles, it is time to expect judgment." (John Trapp. According to Webster's 1828

Dictionary, a *fardle* is "A bundle or little pack.")

ii. The Kenites "were the posterity of Jethro (Jdg. 1:6), who, thought he went not with

Israel, yet some of his children did, and were helpful." (Trapp)

### 3. (7-9) Saul attacks the Amalekites.

And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

a. **Saul attacked the Amalekites:** This was good, and in obedience to the LORD. But it was a selective, incomplete obedience. First, Saul **took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.** God commanded Saul to bring His judgment on *all* the people, including the king.

i. Why did Saul take **Agag king of the Amalekites alive**? "Saul spared *Agag*, either out of a foolish pit for the goodness of his person, which Josephus notes; or for his respect to his royal majesty, in the preservation of which he thought himself concerned; or for the glory of his triumph." (Poole)

ii. "If Saul spare Agag, the people will take liberty to spare the best of the spoil . . . the sins of the great command imitation." (Trapp)

b. As well, **Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them.** God had clearly commanded in 1Sa.

15:3, that every *ox and sheep, camel and donkey* was to be destroyed also, and Saul didn't do this.

i. In a normal war in the ancient world, armies were freely permitted to plunder their conquered foes. This is how the army was often paid. Why was it wrong here? It was wrong for anyone in Israel to benefit from

the war against the Amalekites, because it was an appointed judgment from God. This was just as wrong if a hangman were to empty the pockets of the man he has just executed for murder.

c. As well, they were careful to keep the best for themselves, but **everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.**

They took the care to make sure that they took home the best, and we can imagine they were all pleased with what they had gained after the battle.

i. This perhaps was worst of all, because Israel was not reflecting God's heart in His judgment. When they came home happy and excited because of what they gained from the battle, they implied there was something joyful or happy in the midst of God's judgment. This dishonored God, who brings His judgment reluctantly and without pleasure, longing that men would have repented instead.

ii. "Partial obedience is complete disobedience. Saul and his men obeyed as far as suited them; that is to say, they did not obey God at all, but their own inclinations, both in sparing the good and destroying the worthless. What was not worth carrying off was destroyed, - not because of the command, but to save trouble." (Maclaren)

iii. "We are prepared to obey the Divine commands up to a certain point, and there we stay. Just as soon as 'the best and choicest' begin to be touched, we draw the line and refuse further compliance. We listen to soft voices that bid us to stay our hand,

when our Isaac is on the altar." (Meyer) iv. "But an even deeper reading of this story is permissible. Throughout the Bible Amalek stands for the flesh, having sprung from the stock of Esau, who, for a morsel of meat, steaming fragrantly in the air, sold his birthright. To spare the best of Amalek is surely equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some plausible indulgence, some favourite sin. For us, Agag must stand for that evil propensity, which exists in all of us, for self-gratification; and to spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to exonerate and palliate our failures, and to condone our besetting sin." (Meyer)

4. (10-11) God's word to Samuel.

Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments."

And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.

a. **I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king:** God's heart was broken over Saul's disobedience. The man who started out humble and submissive to God was now boldly going his own way in disobedience to God.

i. How can God say, "**I greatly regret**" ?

Does this mean that God did not know what would happen? That God wanted things to happen a certain way, but was powerless to make them come to pass? Not at all. This is the use of *anthropomorphism*, when God explains Himself to man in human terms, so man can have *some* understanding of God's heart. God knew from the beginning Saul's heart, and Saul's ways, and Saul's destiny.

He knew that He had already *sought for Himself a man after His own heart* (1Sa.

13:14). Yet, as all this unfolded, God's heart was not emotionless. He didn't sit in heaven with a clipboard, checking off boxes, coldly saying, "All according to plan." Saul's disobedience hurt God, and since we couldn't understand what was really happening in God's heart, the closest that we could come is for God to express it in the human terms of saying, **"I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king."**

ii. "Repentance properly notes grief of heart, and change of counsels, and therefore cannot be in God, who is unchangeable, most wise, and most blessed; but it is ascribed to God in such cases, when men give God cause to repent, and when God alters his course and method of dealing, and treats a person as if he did indeed repent of all the kindness he had showed to him." (Poole)

iii. "God's repentance is not a change of his will, but of his work. Repentance with man, is the changing of his will; repentance with God, is the willing of a change." (Trapp) b. **And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night:** Samuel shows that he has God's heart. It hurt God to reject Saul, and it hurt God's prophet to see him rejected. We are close to God's heart when the things that grieve Him grieve us, and the things that please God please us.

5. (12-13) Saul greets Samuel.

So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal." Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed *are* you

of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

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a. **So when Samuel rose early in the**

**morning to meet Saul:** Reluctantly, Samuel (who had anointed Saul as king years before) now comes to discipline the disobedient king.

b. Was Saul grieved over his sin? Not at all.

Instead, **he set up a monument for himself.**

Saul was quite pleased with himself! He felt he had done something good, and he believed he was totally justified in what he had done. There is not the slightest bit of shame or guilt in Saul, even though he had directly disobeyed the LORD.

i. In coming chapters, God will raise up another man to replace Saul as king. David, in contrast to Saul, was known as a man after God's own heart (1Sa. 13:14). Even though David, as king of Israel, would also disobey God, the difference between him and Saul was great. David felt the guilt and shame one should feel when they sin. Saul didn't feel it. His conscience was dead to shame and his heart was dead to God. Saul's heart was so dead he could directly disobey God and **set up a monument for himself** on the occasion!

c. **He set up a monument for himself** also shows that Saul is not the same humble man who once had a humble opinion of himself (1Sa.

9:21) and who once hid among the equipment

out of shyness (1Sa. 10:22). The years, the

military victories, and prestige of the throne of Israel have all revealed the pride in Saul's heart.

i. "But the truth is, he was zealous for his own honour and interest, but lukewarm



where God only was concerned." (Poole)

d. **Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."**

How could Saul do this? How could he come to the prophet of God with such boldness, such confidence, and boast of his obedience? Because of his

pride, Saul is self-deceived. *He probably really believed what he told Samuel.* He probably believed, **"I have performed the commandment of the LORD."** Pride always leads us into self-deception!

i. Maclaren has an insightful comment on

Saul's statement, **"I have performed the commandment of the LORD."** "That is more than true obedience is quick to say. If Saul had done it, he would have been slower to boast of it."

6. (14-16) Saul "explains" his sin to Samuel.

But Samuel said, "What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet!

And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on."

a. **What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?** Saul had been proud of his accomplishments. He *set up a monument for himself.* He could openly - and in his own mind, honestly - say *"I have performed the commandment of the LORD."* At the same time, the evidence of his disobedience was could be heard, even as he spoke! The livestock that God clearly commanded to be killed could be heard, seen, and even smelt even as Saul said, *"I have performed the commandment of the LORD."*

i. Pride and disobedience make us blind - or deaf - to our sin. What was completely

obvious to Samuel was invisible to Saul. We all have blind spots of sin in our lives, and we need to constantly ask God to show them to us. We need to *sincerely* pray the prayer of Psa. 139:23-24: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

ii. I heard one man say to another, "If you only knew how obvious it was to everyone else that you are in the flesh, you would be terribly embarrassed." That could be said of almost any Christian at some time or another. We need to plead with God to reveal our blind spots to us!

b. Saul's excuses are revealing. First, he blames the people, not himself (**They have brought them . . . the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen**). Second, he includes himself in the obedience (**the rest we have utterly destroyed**). Third, he justifies what he has kept because of its fine quality (**the best of the sheep and the oxen**). Fourth, he claims to have done it for a spiritual reason (**to sacrifice to the LORD your God**).

i. Of course, while all this made perfect sense to Saul (in his proud self-deception), it meant nothing to God and Samuel. In fact, it was worse than nothing - it showed that Saul was desperately trying to excuse his sin by word games and half-truths.

ii. But even in his excuse, Saul reveals the real problem: he has a poor relationship with God. Notice how he speaks of God to

Samuel: **"to sacrifice to the LORD your God."** The LORD was not Saul's God. Saul was Saul's God. The LORD was the God of Samuel, not Saul. In his pride, Saul has removed the LORD God from the throne of

his heart.

iii. "O sinners, you *do* miscalculate fearfully when you give to God's servants such false explanations of your sins!" (Blaikie)

c. **The rest we have utterly destroyed:** As it turned out, this was not even true. Saul, in fact, did not even do what he said he did. There were still Amalekites he left alive. David later had to deal with the Amalekites (1Sa. 27:8, 30:1, 2Sa. 8:12). Haman, the evil man who tried to wipe out all the Jewish people in the days of Esther, was in fact a descendant of Agag! (Est. 3:1). Most ironic of all, when Saul was killed on the field of battle, the final thrust of the sword was from the hand of an Amalekite! (2Sa. 1:8-10). When we don't obey God completely, the "left over" portion will surely come back and trouble us, if not kill us!

d. **Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet!"**

Samuel has had enough. He will listen to no more from Saul. The excuse was revealed for what it was - just a lame excuse. Now it is time for Saul to be quiet, and to listen to the word of the LORD through Samuel.

i. But even in this, Saul can't shut up. He shows his proud desire to retain some control by replying, "**Speak on.**" As if the prophet of God Samuel needed Saul's permission! He would speak on, but not

because Saul had given him permission. He would speak on because he was a messenger of God.

B. Saul is rejected as king.

1. (17-21) The charge against Saul, and his feeble defense.

So Samuel said, "When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? Now the LORD sent you on a

mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?" And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

a. **Now the LORD sent you on a mission . . .**

**Why did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?**

This was the *most apparent* of Saul's sins. God had given him a specific command, and he had directly disobeyed it.

i. Though the disobedience was the most apparent sin, the root of Saul's disobedience was far worse: *pride*. Samuel refers to this when he remembers when things were different with Saul: **When you were little**

**in your own eyes, were you not the head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over**

**Israel?** Now, it could no longer be said of Saul, you are **little in your own eyes**. He was big in his own eyes, and that made the LORD small in his eyes!

b. **But I have obeyed the voice of the**

**LORD:** Saul first insists that he is innocent. But he is so self-deceived, that he can say, **I have obeyed the voice of the LORD** and then immediately describe how he *did not obey the voice of the LORD!* (Saul admits that he **brought back Agag king of Amalek**).

i. Saul's claim, **I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites** is plain evidence of the power and depth of his self-deception. First, he admits that he **brought back**

**Agag king of Amalek.** There was an Amalekite right in front of him whom was not **utterly destroyed**! Second, the Biblical record makes it clear that Saul had not even **utterly destroyed** the Amalekites, because later David fought them (1Sa. 27:8, 30:1, 2Sa. 8:12), Esther fought them (Est. 3:1),

and Saul himself was killed by an Amalekite!

(2Sa. 1:8-10) Yet, Saul can "honestly" say,

**" I have obeyed the voice of the LORD"**

and **" I have utterly destroyed the**

**Amalekites"** because he is self-deceived.

ii. "He addeth obstinacy and impenitency to his crime, and justifies his fact, though he

hath nothing of any moment to say but what

he said before. So he gives Samuel the lie,

and reflects upon him as one that had

falsely accused him." (Poole)

c. **But the people took of the plunder:** After insisting he is innocent, Saul then blames the people for the sin. His statement is a half-truth that is a whole lie. It is true that **the people took of the plunder**. But they did so by following Saul's *example* (he spared Agag king of Amalek), and with Saul's *allowance* (he did nothing to stop or discourage them).

i. Saul certainly could be zealous in

commanding his army when it suited *him* to be so. In the previous chapter, he commanded a death sentence on anyone

who ate anything on the day of battle. He

was willing to execute his own son in his

zeal to have his command obeyed. Saul was

full of fire and zeal when it came to his own will, but not when it came to the will of God.

ii. "But his crime was in *consenting*; had he not, the crime would have been *theirs alone*." (Clarke)

2. (22-23) Samuel prophesies God's judgment

against King Saul.

Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

**a. Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.** Religious observance without obedience is empty before God. The best sacrificial offering we could bring to God is a repentant heart (Psa. 51:16-17), and our bodies surrendered to His service for obedience (Rom.

12:1).

i. One could make a thousand sacrifices unto God; work a thousand hours for God's service; or give millions of dollars to His work. But all of those sacrifices mean little if there is not a surrendered heart to God, shown by simple obedience.

ii. In sacrifice we offer the flesh of another creature; in obedience we offer our own will before God. Luther used to say, "I had rather be obedient, than able to work miracles." (Cited in Trapp)

iii. "In sacrifices a man offers only the strange flesh of irrational animals, whereas in obedience he offers his own will, which is rational or spiritual worship." (Keil and Delitzsch)

**b. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry:** A rebellious, stubborn heart rejects God just as certainly as someone rejects God by occult practices or idolatry.

i. Saul's problem wasn't just that he neglected some ceremony. That is how Saul thought of obedience to God. In today's world, he might have said, "What? So God wants me to go to church more? All right, I'll go." But religious observance was not Saul's problem; the problem was that his heart had become rebellious and stubborn against God. If religious observance was not helping *that* problem, then it was no good.

ii. It would have been easy for Saul to point his finger at the Amalekites or the Philistines and say, "Look at those Godless idolaters.

They don't worship the true God like I do."

But Saul didn't worship the true God either, because the real worship of God begins with surrender.

iii. "Though not so great, yet as inexcusable and impudent a sin as witchcraft; as plainly condemned, and as certainly destructive and damnable." (Poole)

iv. "All conscious disobedience is actually idolatry, because it makes self-will, the

human I, into a god." (Keil and Delitzsch) c. **Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from**

**being king:** In his empty religious practice, rebellion, and stubbornness against God, Saul was rejecting God's word. So God rightly rejected him as king over Israel.

i. It would be easy to say, "What, Saul will be rejected as king because he spared a

king and a few sheep and oxen? Later kings of Israel would do far worse, and not be

rejected as king. Why is God being so tough

on Saul?" But God saw Saul's heart, and saw how rebellious and stubborn it was. Saul's

condition was like an iceberg: what was

visible might be manageable in size, but there was far more under the surface that couldn't be seen. God could see it.

ii. So Saul was **rejected . . . from being king**. Yet, it would be almost 25 years before there was another king enthroned in Israel. Saul's rejection was final, but it was not immediate. God needed almost 25 years to train up the right replacement for Saul!

3. (24-25) Saul's weak attempt to repent.

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

a. **I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your**

**words**: So far, so good. Saul's statement begins like a genuine confession, reflecting a genuinely repentant heart. But that changes as he continues: **because I feared the people and obeyed their voice**. In this, Saul refuses to own up to his sin; instead he blames the people who "made him" do it.

i. Again, on the surface, this isn't such a bad statement of repentance. It is better than most the confessions of sin one hears today!

Yet, at the same time, these were only words for Saul. His heart wasn't in them at all.

ii. "When he could deny it no longer, at length he maketh a forced and feigned confession; drawn thereto, more by the danger and damage of his sin, than by the offence; mincing and making the best of an ill matter." (Trapp)

iii. Worst of all, he tries to justify one sin with another. **Because I feared the people** makes that clear. "This was



to excuse one sin with another. He should have trusted in God, done his duty, and not feared what man could do unto him." (Trapp) "This was the best excuse he could make for himself; but had he *feared* GOD *more*, he need have *feared the* PEOPLE *less*." (Clarke)

**b. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship**

**the LORD:** Instead of dealing with the deep issue of his heart of rebellion and stubbornness against God, Saul thinks that with a word from Samuel, everything can be fixed. But a word or two from Samuel will not change the settled nature of Saul's heart.

i. God knew Saul's heart. Not only did He know it was full of rebellion and stubbornness, but it was *settled* in that condition. That is something that no man could know with certainty, looking from the outside. But God knew it, and God had told Samuel the prophet this was the settled state of Saul's heart. A simple " **please pardon my sin**" would not do when one's heart is settled in rebellion and sin against the LORD.

4. (26-31) God's rejection of Saul as king over Israel is final. But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent." Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the

LORD your God." So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

a. **I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king**

**over Israel:** Samuel has nothing more to say on this matter, other than what the LORD has already said through him previously (1Sa.

15:23). That was all there was to talk about.

i. Why would Samuel say, "**I will not return with you**" when Saul just wanted him to worship with him? Because that worship would have no doubt also included

sacrifices, and sacrifices of the animals that Saul and wickedly spared from the

Amalekites. "This was a politic device of Saul's that Samuel might at least seem to

countenance his design, in reserving the cattle for sacrifice; which Samuel seeing, refused to do it." (Poole)

b. **Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you**

**today"** : Saul's desperate action provides a vivid object lesson on how the kingdom was torn away from him.

i. As useless as the torn piece of robe was in his hand, so now his leadership of the nation was futile. Now he was ruling *against* God, not for Him. And just as much as the robe tore because Saul grasped it too tightly, so

his tight grip on his pride and stubbornness meant the kingdom would be taken away

from him. In this respect, Saul was the

opposite of Jesus, of whom it is said He *had always been God by nature, did not cling to His prerogatives as God's Equal, but stripped Himself of all privilege by consenting to be a*

*slave by nature and being born as a mortal man* (Phi. 2:6-7, J.B. Phillips translation).

Jesus was willing to let go, but Saul insisted in clinging on. So Saul lost all, while Jesus gained all!

c. **The Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent:** Saul might have thought there was a way out of this. He was thinking of what he could do to "fix" this. Samuel let him know there was nothing he could do. This was permanent.

i. Samuel uses a title for the LORD found

only here in the whole Bible: **The Strength of Israel**. This reminds Saul that the LORD

is determined in His purpose, and is strong in His will. There will be no change.

ii. The title **The Strength of Israel** was also important, because at that time, Saul probably thought of himself as *the strength of Israel*. After all, 1Sa. 14:47 says, *So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side*.

Saul was a mighty warrior, and it was easy for him to think, "I'm the *strength of Israel*."

But he wasn't. The LORD God was **The Strength of Israel!**

d. **I have sinned, yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel:** Saul's desperate plea shows the depths of his pride. He is far more concerned with his image than his soul.

i. "Here he plainly discovers his hypocrisy, and the true motive of this and his former confession; he was not solicitous for the favour of God, but for his honour and power with Israel." (Poole)

e. **So Samuel turned back after Saul:** Why did Samuel do this? Why didn't he lead an immediate rebellion against Saul, since God had rejected him as king? Because God had not

raised up Saul's replacement yet, and Saul was better than the anarchy that would come with no king.

i. "That people might not upon pretence of this sentence of rejection immediately withdraw all respect and obedience to their sovereign; whereby they would both have sinned against God, and have been as sheep without a shepherd." (Poole)

**f. So Samuel turned back after Saul, and**

**Saul worshipped the LORD:** Did this do any good? It did no "good" in gaining the kingdom back for Saul. That was a decision God had made, and He made it finally. But it may have done Saul good in moving his proud, stubborn heart closer to God for the sake of saving his soul. At least it had that opportunity, so Samuel allowed Saul to come with him and worship the LORD.

5. (32-33) Samuel carries out God's will.

Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

a. **Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me."** For Samuel, the issue is not yet resolved. There is still the matter of Saul's incomplete obedience. God's command to *utterly destroy* all of Amalek still stood, even if Saul had not obeyed it.

b. **And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."** As Agag came to the old prophet, he thought, "We will let bygones be bygones. I guess this old prophet will let me go home now." The Living Bible expresses the thought well: *Agag arrived all full of smiles, for he thought "surely the worst is over and I have been spared."*

i. "I who have escaped death from the

hands of a warlike prince in the fury of battle, shall certainly never suffer death from an old prophet in time of peace." (Poole)

c. **As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women:** Samuel makes it clear that Agag was not some innocent bystander when it came to the atrocities the Amalekites inflicted on Israel. Agag was the wicked, violent leader of a wicked, violent people. God's judgment against him and the Amalekites was just.

d. **And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal:** Samuel was a priest, and had officiated at hundreds of animal sacrifices. He knew what it was like for the blade to cut into flesh; but he had never killed another person. Now, without hesitation, this old prophet raises a sword - or probably, a large knife, because that is what Samuel would have used in sacrifices - and brings it down upon this proud, violent king. **Samuel hacked Agag in pieces.**

i. Notably, Samuel did it **before the LORD**.

This was not *before Saul*, to show him how weak and proud he was. This was not *before Israel*, to show them how strong and tough Samuel was. No; this was **before the LORD**, in tough obedience to the LORD

God. This scene must have been shockingly violent; the stomachs of those watching must have turned. Yet Samuel did it all **before the LORD**.

ii. "But these are no precedents for private persons to take the sword of justice into their hands; for we must live by the laws of God, and not by extraordinary examples." (Poole)

6. (34-35) The tragic split between Samuel and Saul. Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up

to his house at Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death.

Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

**a. And Samuel went no more to see Saul**

**until the day of his death:** Samuel knew that it wasn't his place to see Saul. It was Saul's place to come to him in humble repentance before the LORD. If he did, it probably would not have restored the kingdom to Saul; but it could have restored his heart before God. But Saul never came to see Samuel. **Ramah** and **Gibeah** were less than ten miles apart, but they never saw each other again.

i. "But we read, chap. xix. 22-24, that *Saul* went to see *Samuel* at Naioth, but this does not affect what is said here. From this time Samuel had no *connection* with Saul; he never more acknowledged him as king; he mourned and prayed for him." (Clarke)

ii. The next time Saul and Samuel "meet" will be a strange situation in itself! (1 Samuel 28)

**b. Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul:** Samuel was not a cold, dispassionate messenger of God's word. He hurt for Saul. "For the hardness of his heart, and the hazard of his soul." (Trapp) © 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Here is what the LORD of hosts says: 'I carefully observed how the Amalekites opposed Israel along the way when Israel came up from Egypt. **3** So go now and strike down the Amalekites. Destroy everything that they have. Don't spare them. Put them to death - man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey alike.'"

**4** So Saul assembled the army and mustered them at Telaim. There were 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

**5** Saul proceeded to the city of Amalek, where he set an ambush in the wadi. **6** Saul said to the Kenites, "Go on and leave! Go down from among the Amalekites!"

Otherwise I will sweep you away with them! After all, you were kind to all the Israelites when they came up from Egypt.” So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

**7** Then Saul struck down the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, which is next to Egypt. **8** He captured King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but he executed all Agag’s people with the sword. **9** However, Saul and the army spared Agag, along with the best of the flock, the cattle, the fatlings, and the lambs, as well as everything else that was of value. They were not willing to slaughter them. But they did slaughter everything that was despised and worthless.

**10** Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: **11** “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I told him to do.” Samuel became angry and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

**12** Then Samuel got up early to meet Saul the next morning. But Samuel was informed, “Saul has gone to Carmel where he is setting up a monument for himself. Then Samuel left and went down to Gilgal.” **13** When Samuel came to him, Saul said to him, “May the LORD bless you! I have done what the LORD said.”

**14** Samuel replied, “If that is the case, then what is this sound of sheep in my ears and the sound of cattle that I hear?” **15** Saul said, “They were brought from the Amalekites; the army spared the best of the flocks and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD our God. But everything else we slaughtered.”

**16** Then Samuel said to Saul, “Wait a minute! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” Saul said to him, “Tell me.” **17** Samuel said, “Is it not true that when you were insignificant in your own eyes, you became head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD chose you as king over Israel. **18** The LORD sent you on a campaign saying, ‘Go and exterminate those sinful Amalekites! Fight against them until you have destroyed them.’ **19** Why haven’t you obeyed the LORD? Instead you have greedily rushed upon

the plunder! You have done what is wrong in the LORD's estimation."

**20** Then Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the LORD! I went on the campaign the LORD sent me on. I brought back King Agag of the Amalekites after exterminating the Amalekites. **21** But the army took from the plunder some of the sheep and cattle – the best of what was to be slaughtered – to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

**22** Then Samuel said, "Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices

as much as he does in obedience?

Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice; paying attention is better than the fat of rams.

**23** For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and presumption is like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

**24** Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have disobeyed what the LORD commanded and what you said as well. For I was afraid of the army, and I followed their wishes.

**25** Now please forgive my sin! Go back with me so I can worship the LORD."

**26** Samuel said to Saul, "I will not go back with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel!"

**27** When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the edge of his robe and it tore. **28** Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to one of your colleagues who is better than you!

**29** The Preeminent One of Israel does not go back on his word or change his mind, for he is not a human being who changes his mind." **30** Saul again replied, "I have sinned.

But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel. Go back with me so I may worship the LORD



your God.” **31** So Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

**32** Then Samuel said, “Bring me King Agag of the Amalekites.” So Agag came to him trembling, thinking to himself, “Surely death is bitter!” **33** Samuel said, “Just as your sword left women childless, so your mother will be the most bereaved among women!” Then Samuel hacked Agag to pieces there in Gilgal before the LORD.

**34** Then Samuel went to Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. **35** Until the day he died Samuel did not see Saul again. Samuel did, however, mourn for Saul, but the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

**1** The LORD said to Samuel, “How long do you intend to mourn for Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel.

Fill your horn with olive oil and go! I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, for I have selected a king for myself from among his sons.”

Guzik - 1 Samuel 16:1-23

### **1 Samuel 16 - God Chooses David**

A. Samuel anoints David as king.

*Psalms that may go with this period: 8, 19, 23, and 29.*

1. (1-3) God tells Samuel to go and anoint a new king over Israel.

Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears *it*, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

a. **How long will you mourn for Saul:** There is a time to mourn, but there is also a time to move on and do what God wants us to do. **Fill your horn with oil** must have excited

Samuel, because he knew that God wanted him to anoint someone else as king over Israel.

i. God will never allow His work to die with the death or failure of a man. If it is *God's* work, it goes beyond any man. Perhaps Samuel was paralyzed with mourning

because of Saul's tragic rebellion, but God was not paralyzed.

ii. Surely, Satan wanted Samuel to remain trapped in mourning over the tragedies of the past. He wanted Samuel stuck there, unable to move on with the LORD. But there are times when God tells us to simply move on. This is what God told Moses at the shores of the Red Sea: *Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.*

(Exo. 14:15) It was time for Samuel to *go forward*.

**b. I am sending you to Jesse the**

**Bethlehemite:** The new king for Israel would be found **among his sons**, the sons of Jesse.

Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz (Rth. 4:17, 22).

c. **How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me:** We can certainly *understand* Samuel's fear. There isn't any doubt that Saul would consider this treason. At the same time, it

shows a note of fear in Samuel we are almost surprised to see. Perhaps Samuel's excessive mourning over Saul has introduced an element of fear and unbelief in his heart. In truth, Samuel didn't have anything to worry about, because God promised **I will show you what you shall do.**

i. Was God telling Samuel to lie? Not at all.

"This was strictly *true*; Samuel *did offer a sacrifice*; and it does not appear that he could have done the work which

God designed, unless he had offered this sacrifice, and called the elders of the people together, and this collected Jesse's sons. But he did not tell the principle design of his coming; had he done so, it would have produced *evil* and *no good*: and though no man, in any circumstances, should ever *tell a lie*, yet in all circumstances he is not obliged to tell the *whole* truth, though in every circumstance he must tell *nothing but the truth*, and in every case so tell the truth that the hearer shall not believe a lie by it." (Clarke)

**d. For I have provided Myself a king**

**among his sons:** Years before this, Israel rejected the LORD God as their king, and they wanted a human king instead. God gave them their human king, after their own desire (Saul), but God is still on the throne, crowning who He pleases, as He pleases.

i. The simple fact was that God *was* ruling Israel. They could recognize His rule, submit to it, and enjoy the benefits; or they could resist His reign over Israel, and suffer

because of it. It does not matter what my attitude towards God is, as far as it affects His ultimate victory. The LORD is God and

King, and will always triumph. But my attitude matters *everything* as it affects my ultimate destiny.

ii. Poole on **I have provided Myself a**

**king:** "This phrase is very emphatical, and implies the difference between this and the former king. Saul was a king of the people's

providing, he was the product of their inordinate and sinful desires; they desired him for themselves, and for their own glory and safety, as they supposed; but this is a king of my own providing, one that I have spied out, one of that tribe to which I have allotted the kingdom."

iii. We don't have to fear for the future when we know God has provided for Himself

leaders. In some unlikely place, God is raising up leaders for His people. He will keep them obscure and hidden until the right time, then God will raise them up. God will always provide for Himself leaders.

**e. You shall anoint for Me the one I name**

**to you:** The first king of Israel was anointed *for the people*. He was the "king from central casting," the kind of king the people wanted.

Now, the "people's choice" had failed and disqualified himself. Now, the LORD said, it's time for a king **for Me**. God was going to show Israel *His* king.

i. Because Israel was not walking in God's heart, and God's mind, we should expect that God's king would not look like the "people's choice" king. God had no interest in bringing "Saul Number Two" to the throne of Israel. This would be a different kind of king, who would be unto the LORD *a man after His own heart* (1Sa. 13:14).

2. (4-5) Samuel comes to sacrifice at Bethlehem.

So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice."

Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

**a. So Samuel did what the LORD said, and**

**went to Bethlehem:** Bethlehem was a small town, not very far from Jerusalem. It was the home of Ruth and Boaz, from whom the family of Jesse descended. It was a hilly grain-growing region, with many small grain fields carved into the hillsides.

**b. And the elders of the town trembled at**

**his coming, and said, "Do you come**

**peaceably?"** Considering what Samuel had just done with the Amalekite king Agag (1Sa.

15:33), it's no wonder the elders of Bethlehem were afraid.

c. **Come with me to the sacrifice:** The idea was not that Jesse and his sons were to just watch Samuel sacrifice this heifer. They would watch the sacrifice, then they would share in a large ceremonial meal, eating the meat that came from the sacrificed animal.

i. When an animal was sacrificed to atone for sin, none of it was eaten and it was all burned before the LORD. But when an animal was sacrificed as a peace offering, a fellowship offering, or a consecration offering, then part of the animal was burnt before the LORD, and part of it was eaten in a special ceremonial meal.

3. (6-10) God doesn't choose any of Jesse's older sons.

So it was, when they came, that he looked at

Eliab and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed *is* before Him."

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees*; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."

a. **Surely the LORD's anointed is before**

**Him:** As Samuel looked at **Eliab**, the oldest son of Jesse, he thought "This man sure looks like a king. This must be the one God will tell me to anoint. That's a good choice, God!" Samuel saw a tall, good looking young man who *looked* like he would be a great king and leader.

b. **Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him:** Samuel made the mistake of judging Eliab based on his **appearance**. This was the same mistake Israel had made when it came to the failed king Saul. Saul *looked* the part of a king, but he didn't have the *heart* a king of God's people should have. It didn't matter how good Eliab *looked*, because God said, "**I have refused him.**"

c. **For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.** This was both a *statement of fact*, and an *exhortation to godly thinking*.

i. First, it was a *statement of fact*. **Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.** Even the best of men will look **at the outward appearance**. Samuel was guilty of it right at that moment. We must understand that we can't read the secrets of someone else's

heart, and we often do only judge on outward appearance. "The world is full of idolatries, but I question if any idolatry has been more extensively practiced than the idolatry of the outward appearance." (Blaikie)

ii. Second, it was an *exhortation to godly thinking*. God was telling Samuel, "Your natural inclination is to only judge on outward appearance. But I can judge the heart that you can't see. So look to Me, and don't be so quick to judge a person only on their **outward appearance**." Samuel needed to know his natural inclination to judge only on **outward appearance**, but

he didn't have to give into it. He could seek the LORD and seek God's heart and mind when looking at people.

d. **The LORD has not chosen these:** God told Samuel that He had not chosen any of the seven sons of Jesse who attended the sacrificial feast. It wasn't that these sons of Jesse were bad men, but they were not God's choice. God had a man in mind different from Samuel's or Jesse's expectation.

i. Eliab and the seven oldest sons of Jesse were perfect potential kings as far as the flesh is concerned. But God didn't want a king after the flesh. Israel already had one of those! God needed to do more than fix up a fleshly king; God looked for a different kind of king. "To educate and refine the flesh so that it may become profitable in His service is never God's plan. He insists on the sentence of death upon everything that you and I are in ourselves . . . There is only one place for all that is 'self' - on

Calvary." (Redpath)

ii. "All the things which men count as privileges, and therefore as creating fitness for position and high service, are in themselves of no value in the sight of God.

He looketh on the heart. He considers the deepest fact in personality, the inner and hidden impulse, desire, affection." (Morgan) 4. (11) Samuel asks about a missing son.

And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep."

And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here."

a. **Are all the young men here?** Samuel had a problem. God had told him of Jesse, *I have provided Myself a king among his sons* (1Sa.

16:1). Yet here were the seven sons of Jesse, and God had not chosen any of these. Since

Samuel knew God's word was true, he knew there must be another son of Jesse who was not at the sacrificial feast.

i. Samuel was a prophet, and knew how to trust the word of the LORD given to him. He might have said, "I guess the LORD was wrong when He told me it would be one of Jesse's sons," but he didn't say that. He might have said, "It has to be one of these seven sons, so pass them by me again" but he didn't say that. He had confidence in the word of the LORD when it came to the prophecy regarding Jesse's sons, and he had confidence in the word of the LORD when it came to God's rejection of each of the seven sons. We should trust God's Word as much as Samuel trusted the word of the LORD!

b. **There remains the youngest:** This shows the low regard David had among his own family. First, his father doesn't even mention him by name. Second, he wasn't even invited to the sacrificial feast. Third, he would not have been brought unless Samuel insisted on it.

i. "So small was David in his father's esteem that it wasn't considered necessary to include him in the family when the prophet of God called them to sacrifice." (Redpath) ii. When we consider that David was the youngest of eight sons, we aren't surprised at the low regard he had in his own family.

It wasn't because David's character or conduct was unworthy, it was simply because he was the youngest of eight sons.

iii. This is often how God chooses. Paul wrote *that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called* (1Co. 1:26). God often



chooses unlikely people to do His work, so that all know the work is God's work, not man's work. He wants to work in a way so that people regard His servants as they regarded Samson: they wondered at the secret of his strength (Jdg. 16:5).

iv. "You may not be intellectual or well thought of in your family circle; you may be despised by others for your faith in Christ. Perhaps you had only a little share in the love of your parents, as David did. But remember that those who are rejected of men often become beloved of the Lord." (Redpath)

v. "You may have nothing in your outward semblance, nothing in your surroundings or circumstances, to indicate the true royalty within; but if you bare your heart to God, you shall stand revealed as his son, as a priest and a king unto Himself." (Meyer) c. **And there he is, keeping the sheep**: When was David called for this great anointing?

When he was out **keeping the sheep**. David was simply doing his job, being faithful in small things and doing what his father told him to do.

i. **Keeping the sheep** was a servant's job.

The fact that David was out **keeping the sheep** showed that the family of Jesse was not especially wealthy, because if they were, a servant would have been **keeping the sheep**. But they were not affluent enough to have servants. David was the servant, and **keeping the sheep** was a servant's

job. "David was none of your strutting peacocks who cannot be content unless all eyes are upon them; he sang God's praises

as the nightingale will sing in the dark when no human ear is listening and no eye is admiring. He was content to bloom unseen, knowing that the sweetness of a renewed heart is never wasted on the desert air. He was satisfied with God alone as his auditor, and he coveted not the high opinion of man." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Keeping the sheep** meant you had time to think. David would spend a lot of time looking over the sheep and looking at the glory of God's creation. God built in him the heart that would sing,

*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*

*Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

(Psa. 19:1-4)

*O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!*

(Psalm 8)

iii. **Keeping the sheep** took a special heart, a special care. It meant you knew how sheep needed the care and help of a good

shepherd. It meant that you knew you were a sheep and God was your shepherd. During these years, God built in David the heart that would sing,

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* (Psalm 23)

iv. **Keeping the sheep** meant you had to trust God in the midst of danger. David had lions and bears and wolves to contend with, and the sheep had to be protected. "The country round Bethlehem was not a peaceful paradise, and the career of a shepherd was not the easy life of lovesick swains which poets dream." (Blaikie)

v. Does God have you **keeping the sheep** right now? Are you in a humble, lowly, servant's place, but feel that God has called you to greater things? If He has, it will only be fulfilled as you are faithful in **keeping the sheep** right where you are at. This isn't *waiting* time, this is *training* time. David was a great man, and a great king over Israel, because he *never lost his shepherd's heart*.

5. (12-13) David is chosen and anointed.

So he sent and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this *is* the one!" Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

a. **Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking:** The physical description of David tells us he was of fair complexion (this is probably the meaning of **ruddy**, and a light complexion was considered attractive in that culture). He had **bright eyes**, which speak of vitality and intelligence. And he was **good-looking**.

i. David had a pleasant appearance, but he did not look like Saul, who was *a choice and handsome young man. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.*

(1Sa. 9:2) David looked nice, but you didn't look at him and say, "There's a born leader. There is a king." That is what people said when they looked at Saul. When they looked at David, they said "That's a nice looking boy."

ii. But look at what God said to Saul about David prophetically in 1Sa. 15:28: *The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.* As unlikely as he appeared, David was *better than* Saul in the eyes of God.

iii. We don't know how old David was at this time. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus says that David was ten years old. Others guess he was about fifteen years old. It's safe to say he was somewhere in that range.

b. **And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"** David's seven brothers, by all outward appearance, seemed to be better material for royalty. David, as unlikely as he was, was **the one**.

i. If it was strange for God to find the king of Israel at the sheepfold, it was even stranger for the Savior of the World to come from a carpenter's shop. God looks for different qualities in leaders than we normally look for.

ii. David was a shepherd, but there were a lot of shepherds. David was good-looking, but so were a lot of young men. David was young, but there were plenty of young men God could have chosen. God described what made David special in 1Sa. 13:14: *The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD had commanded him to be commander over His people.* What made David **the one** was that he was *a man after God's own heart*.

iii. God's choice of David shows that we don't have to quit our jobs and enter into full-time ministry to be people after God's own heart. We don't need to be famous or prominent to be people after God's own heart. We don't need to be respected or even liked by others to be people after God's own heart. We don't need status, influence, power, the respect or approval of men, or great responsibilities to be people after God's own heart.

iv. Where did David get this heart?

Obviously, from time spent with the LORD.

But someone started him on that path.

David says nothing of his father, but twice in the Psalms he refers to his mother as a

*maidservant* of the LORD (Psa. 86:16 and 116:16). Probably, it was David's godly mother who poured her heart and love and

devotion of the LORD into him, and gave him a foundation to build on in his own walk with the LORD. Like Timothy, another young man used of the LORD, God used David's mother to pour into him a godly faith (2Ti.

1:5). Mothers, might God use you to raise up a David or a Timothy?

**d. Then Samuel took the horn of oil and**

**anointed him in the midst of his brothers:** From the actions of David, Jesse, and David's brothers from this point on, we can gather that only God and Samuel knew exactly what was happening here.

i. Everyone else probably thought that Samuel was just honoring David for some reason. Probably no one even dared to think that this was David's anointing to be king over all Israel. But God knew, because He had been working in David's heart for a long time. "The public anointing was the outcome of what had taken place in private between

David and God long before." (Redpath)

ii. In some ways, David's anointing was similar to Saul's (1Sa. 10:1). Both were anointed in secret, and neither immediately took the throne. But over time, David responded to the anointing of God in a completely different way than Saul.

iii. There were three outward evidences of the destiny God had for David's life. The first evidence was the anointing. He received that

immediately. The second evidence was the spiritual battle he entered into with Saul.

The final evidence was when he received the

crown and was enthroned in Israel, some 25 years later. It was a long time between the time David was chosen and anointed to be a king and the time he was crowned. In our lives, it is a long time for most of us between when we are chosen and anointed, and the time when we receive our crowns (2Ti. 4:8). In between, there is a lot of conflict and spiritual warfare God has for us. The spiritual warfare is just as much evidence of our destiny as the anointing and the crowning!

**e. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward:** The real anointing happened when the Holy Spirit came upon David. The oil on the head was just a sign of this inward reality.

i. The symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon David was the anointing oil on his head. The symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus was the dove that appeared from heaven. The symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples was the tongues of fire that appeared over their heads. The Holy Spirit loves to do His work as *He* wills, in many different ways.

**f. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah:**

What? Didn't Samuel begin a "Let's Enthroned David" political party? Didn't he begin to undermine Saul's throne, and look for a way to establish David as king? No. Samuel took one look at David, and reacted exactly the way God wanted him to: "LORD, I don't know why You chose this kid. But You will have to put him on the throne. I can't do it."

i. And God would do it. 1Sa. 16:13 is the first mention of the name **David** in the book of 1 Samuel. He has been prophetically referred to on several occasions before (1Sa.

13:14, 15:28). But this is the first mention of his name, which means "Beloved" or "Loved One."

ii. David will become one of the greatest men of the Bible, being mentioned more than 1,000 times in the pages of Scripture - more than Abraham, more than Moses, more than any man in the New Testament. It's no accident that Jesus wasn't known as the "Son of Abraham" or the "Follower of Moses," but as the *Son of David* (Mat. 9:27

and at least a dozen other places).

iii. "From whatever side we view the life of David, it is remarkable. It may be that

Abraham excelled him in faith, and Moses in the power of concentrated fellowship with God, and Elijah in the fiery force of his enthusiasm. But none of these was so many-sided as the richly gifted son of Jesse." (Meyer)

iv. But it all began here - as David was *keeping the sheep*. No wonder the LORD would later say of David, in Psa. 78:70-72:

*He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.*

B. Saul's distressing spirit.

1. (14) Saul's **distressing spirit** troubles him.

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.

a. In 1Sa. 16:13, *the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward*. As the Spirit of the LORD comes upon David, a **distressing spirit** came to Saul, and **troubled him**.



b. If God is all-good, why did He send a **distressing spirit** upon Saul? There are two senses in which God may *send* something. He may send something in the active sense, or He may send something in a passive sense.

Actively, God never initiates or performs evil; He is *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning* (Jam. 1:17).

Passively, God may withdraw the hand of His protection, and therefore allow evil to come, without being the source of the evil itself.

c. This is indicated by what happened with Saul.

First, **the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul**. This meant Saul lost his spiritual "protection" and covering. So, Satan was more than ready to send a **distressing spirit** to fill the void in Saul.

i. "God seems to have taken what gifts he had, and given them to David; and then the evil spirit came upon Saul; for what God fills not, the devil will." (Clarke)

ii. This is why the continual presence of the Holy Spirit for all Christians is such a comfort for us. We don't have to fear that God will take the Holy Spirit from us (Rom. 8:9-11, 1Co. 6:19-20).

iii. Ellison on the distressing spirit: "With us it suggests a spirit that was morally evil . . .

here it merely conveys the thought that the outcome of his working was calamitous for Saul."

c. Why? Did God allow all this? Perhaps this was to judge Saul's past wickedness and rebellion against the Holy Spirit's guidance. This may be an example of God giving Saul over to his sin.

i. Saul clearly had the Spirit of the LORD upon him at one time (1Sa. 10:10). Yet, as he showed himself proud and rebellious

against God, Saul resisted the Holy Spirit. He told the Holy Spirit "No" and "Go away" so many times, that God finally gave Saul what he wanted. But Saul never realized the price he would pay when **the Spirit of the LORD departed from him**. Saul thought he would be more free to do *his thing* without the **Spirit of the LORD** "bugging" him. He didn't realize he would be in even more bondage to **a distressing spirit** that **troubled him**.

ii. Even in this, Saul could have repented. He was not past the place of repentance and restoration before God. It was up to him to receive God's correction and respond with a tender, repentant heart before the LORD.

**d. A distressing spirit from the LORD**

**troubled him:** Today, Saul would probably be diagnosed as mentally ill. Yet his problem was spiritual in nature, not mental or psychological.

i. There are many people in mental hospitals today that are really suffering from spiritual problems. It is certainly wrong to assume that every case of mental distress is spiritual, because chemical imbalances and physiological problems are also real in our fallen world. Even so, there are certainly some that liberation from a **distressing spirit**, and may never find it in our modern mental health system.

ii. "I have considered his malady to be of a *mixed* kind, *natural* and *diabolical*; there is too much of apparent *nature* in it to permit us to believe it was all *spiritual*, and there is too much of apparent *supernatural* influence to suffer us to believe that it was all *natural*." (Clarke)

2. (15-17) A solution suggested.

And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command

your servants, *who are* before you, to seek out a man *who is* a skillful player on the harp; and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring *him* to me."

a. **Saul's servants said to him, "Surely a distressing spirit from God is troubling you."** It was obvious to **Saul's servants**, but it does not seem to have been obvious to Saul.

Often our spiritual condition is far more apparent to others than it is to our selves.

b. **Seek out man who is a skillful player:** Essentially, Saul's servants are advising that he find what we would call a "worship leader."

They will **seek out a man** who can, using music, bring the love, peace, and power of God to Saul.

i. God created music, and gave it the capability to touch people with great power.

Music can be used for great good or for great evil, because it is such a power tool of communication to our inner being.

ii. Especially, God wants the power of music to be used in worshipping Him. In heaven, God's people worship Him with music and singing (Rev. 14:2-3). On earth, we should worship God the same way (Psalm 150).

Worship is, and should be, more than music and singing; but certainly music and singing are wonderful, God-appointed ways to worship the LORD!

iii. God wants His people to worship Him, and God can do a tremendous work in the hearts and lives of His people through worship. Because worship is so important, worship leaders are important. Saul needed

to be *led* into worship, so it was important to **seek out a man** to do the job.

iv. There is a sense in which the worship minister is like a priest in the Old Testament, standing between God and the congregation. His job is not to entertain the people, or even to please the people, but to lead them into worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

v. In describing the ministry of priests in Exo. 28:1-21, 29, the LORD repeatedly called them to *minister to Me*. Clearly, the job of the priests was to offer ministry unto God; yet at the same time, God wanted them to have a heart for the people. On their shoulders and over their hearts, God wanted to priests to have the names of the tribes of Israel. This shows both aspects of worship ministry - it has to be done unto the LORD, yet with the people on our hearts and shoulders. In worship ministry, there can be two harmful extremes. We can do ministry connected to the LORD, but not to the people; or we can do ministry connected to the people but not to the LORD. We have to be in close communion with God, and have the people on our hearts (loving them) and on our shoulders (working hard for them).

c. **You shall be well:** In the past, Saul received the Spirit of the LORD in the presence of music (1Sa. 10:10). Perhaps this is an effort to recreate that experience.

3. (18) A man is nominated.

Then one of the servants answered and said,

"Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the

Bethlehemite, *who is* skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome

person; and the LORD *is* with him."

a. **Look, I have seen a son of Jesse:** Saul's servants suggested that Saul command a search; Saul commanded the search, and then

one of Saul's servants answered and said he had found a man to be Saul's worship leader.

What kind of man was this **son of Jesse**

(David), to make him a fit worship leader for Saul?

b. **Skillful in playing:** To lead Saul in worship, and to minister to him in music, David had to be **skillful in playing**. The technical quality of music makes a difference in being an effective worship leader. The heart matters, but so does technical ability.

i. This doesn't mean that a person has to be a virtuoso before they can be used of God.

But it does mean that they cannot tolerate a too casual, unconcerned, lazy, "we don't really need to practice" attitude. **Skillful in playing** reflects an *attitude* as much as it reflects *ability*.

c. **A mighty man of valor, a man of war:** Worship ministry is a constant battleground.

There are often conflicts and contentions surrounding worship ministry, and if someone isn't equipped and ready for spiritual warfare, they will probably be spiritually and emotionally "injured" in worship ministry, and probably "injure" others!

i. So much of what makes a person a good *musician* or a good *artist* goes against true worship ministry. The desire for the spotlight, the desire for prominence, the desire for attention, the need for ego satisfaction, all work against effective worship.

ii. Worship ministers must make war against the *world*. Worldly ideas and approaches to music don't belong in worship ministry. This isn't to say that certain

musical styles are off-limits; much of today's "old fashioned gospel music" was cutting edge when first composed. But it does mean that the things that are important to the world in music shouldn't be important in worship.

iii. Worship ministers must make war against the *devil*. He is constantly trying to stir up strife, jealousy, hurt feelings, pride, discouragement, and anything else he can find. Satan has a special "regard" for worship ministry, because before his fall, he was the "worship leader" of heaven (Eze. 28:12-15).

iv. Worship ministers must make war against the *flesh*. To be effective in worship ministry, or in any ministry, one must *die to self*. If you "must" be up on the platform, you need to die to self. If you "must" have a solo, you need to die to self. If you "must" have it your way, you need to die to self. Much of the conflict in worship ministry blamed on the devil really comes just from the flesh. The devil just doesn't have the time to be the source of all the problems that can come up in worship ministry! Sometimes it is much more convenient to blame then devil than to die to self and crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.

d. **Prudent in speech:** Good worship ministry needs a lot of diplomacy. Everyone has an opinion on music, and everyone has a suggestion. Effective worship ministers know when to speak and when to be quiet on the platform, among the team, and in the congregation.

e. **A handsome person:** David was a good-looking young man (1Sa. 16:12). An effective worship minister doesn't need to be a fashion model, but their appearance is important. They need to present themselves so as to be *invisible*.

If they are so dressed up, or so dressed down, that their appearance calls attention to themselves, it needs to change.

f. **The LORD is with him:** This is the most important attribute. The other measures will grow and develop, but it must be said of any

worship minister, **the LORD is with him**. This means that they called by God, submitting to God, and submitting to whatever leadership the LORD has placed over them.

4. (19-23) David enters Saul's court.

Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who *is* with the sheep." And Jesse took a donkey *loaded with* bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent *them* by his son David to Saul. So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer.

Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play *it* with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

a. **Send me your son David, who is with**

**the sheep:** Since this happened after Samuel anointed David, we know that he simply returned to **the sheep** after he was anointed king. Perhaps David didn't understand the significance of what Samuel did yet. Or, if he did, he understood that it was *God's job* to bring him to the throne. In the meantime, David would simply go back to **the sheep**.

b. David did not have to manipulate his way into the palace or into Saul's favor. He allowed the LORD to open the doors

for him. David didn't have to wonder, "Is this of the LORD or is of me?" because he let the LORD open the doors for him.

i. "Wonder not that David was so suddenly advanced, from a poor contemptible

shepherd, to so great a reputation; for these were the effects of that Spirit of the Lord,

which he received when he was anointed." (Poole)

**c. And he loved him greatly, and he**

**became his armorbearer:** David was an outstanding young man who was worthy of his name ("Beloved" or "Loved One"). Saul took to him immediately, and gave him the important and trusted position of **armorbearer**, his chief assistant in battle. A soldier's life would often depend on the courage and faithfulness of his **armorbearer**, and Saul knew David was worthy of this position.

i. This was an important time in David's life and training for the destiny God had for him.

For the first time, he was in a royal court, and began to learn the customs and manners that he would need to be a good king later in life.

**d. David would take a harp and play it:** A **harp** is a lyre, the ancient version of the guitar.

This isn't speaking of one of the big harps you might find in an orchestra.

**e. Then Saul would become refreshed and**

**well:** God used David to minister to Saul. David was happy to be used. What seemed like a great arrangement would not stay great for very long.

i. God was at work in ways no one could see. It seems plain to us from our distant perspective, but at the time, perhaps only Samuel knew what was going on.



"Unwittingly, Saul was becoming dependent on the one designated to succeed him." (Baldwin)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Samuel replied, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me!" But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' **3** Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you should do. You will anoint for me the one I point out to you."

**4** Samuel did what the LORD told him. When he arrived in Bethlehem, the elders of the city were afraid to meet him. They said, "Do you come in peace?" **5** He replied, "Yes, in peace. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." So he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

**6** When they arrived, Samuel noticed Eliab and said to himself, "Surely, here before the LORD stands his chosen king!" **7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.

God does not view things the way men do. People look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

**8** Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one, either." **9** Then Jesse presented Shammah. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

**10** Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." **11** Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Is that all of the young men?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest one, but he's taking care of the flock." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we cannot turn our attention to other things until he comes here."

**12** So Jesse had him brought in. Now he was ruddy, with attractive eyes and a handsome appearance. The LORD said,

“Go and anoint him. This is the one!” **13** So Samuel took the horn full of olive oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day onward. Then Samuel got up and went to Ramah.

**14** Now the Spirit of the LORD had turned away from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. **15**

Then Saul's servants said to him, "Look, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you!" **16** Let our lord instruct his servants who are here before you to look for a man who knows how to play the lyre. Then whenever the evil spirit from God comes upon you, he can play the lyre and you will feel better." **17** So Saul said to his servants, "Find me a man who plays well and bring him to me." **18** One of his attendants replied, "I have seen a son of Jesse in Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave warrior and is articulate and handsome, for the LORD is with him."

**19** So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is out with the sheep." **20** So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a container of wine, and a young goat and sent them to Saul with his son David. **21**

David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul liked him a great deal, and he became his armor bearer. **22** Then Saul sent word to Jesse saying, "Let David be my servant, for I really like him."

**23** So whenever the spirit from God would come upon Saul, David would take his lyre and play it. This would bring relief to Saul and make him feel better. Then the evil spirit would leave him alone.

**1** The Philistines gathered their troops for battle. They assembled at Socoh in Judah. They camped in Ephes Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 17:1-58

### ***1 Samuel 17 - David and Goliath***

A. Goliath challenges Israel.

1. (1-10) The Philistine Goliath challenges Israel.

Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered together at Sochoh, which *belongs* to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim.

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of

Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span. *He had* a bronze helmet on his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of bronze. And *he had* bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. Now the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead *weighed* six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him. Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? *Am* I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

a. **They encamped in the Valley of Elah:** The green, rolling hills surrounding the Valley of Elah still stand today, and witnessed one of the most remarkable battles in all the Bible. It began when the Philistines, constant enemies of Israel during this period, assembled their army on **mountain**, and on another **mountain** stood the army of Israel.

b. **And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath:** In their army, the Philistines had one particularly impressive soldier, named **Goliath**. He was a large man (**six cubits and a span** can be anywhere from 8'5" to 9'2"), and he had armor and weapons to match his size.

i. Goliath was **from Gath**, and Jos. 11:22 says that a people known as the Anakim

were still there in Joshua's day. That was some 400 years before this, but it shows how there may have continued to be men of unusually large size coming from the city of Gath.

ii. Goliath was tall, but his height is not unheard of in history. Poole on Goliath's height: "Which is not strange, for besides the giants mentioned in the Scriptures, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny, and others, make mention of persons seven cubits high, which is near double to an ordinary man's height." Youngblood mentions the documented case of Robert Pershing Wadlow, who was eight feet eleven inches tall at the time of his death on July 15, 1940, at the age of twenty-two.

iii. "Men of an extraordinary size are not uncommon even in our own day: I knew two brothers of the name of *Knight*, who were born in the same township with myself, who were *seven feet six inches high*; and another, in the same place, *Charles Burns*, who was *eight feet six!* These men were well and proportionably made. (Clarke) iv. Clarke says that the word **champion** really comes from the Hebrew word, "a *middle man*, the *man between two*." The idea is that this was a man who stood between the two armies and fought as a representative of his army.

v. Different sources give different estimates, but Goliath's armor and weapons together probably weighed somewhere between 150 and 200 pounds. This was a big man, and strong enough to carry and use these huge weapons.

c. **Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me . . . I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together:** Goliath issued a bold challenge to the army of Israel.

2. (11) The fear of Saul and all Israel.

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

a. **When they heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid:** Of course, that was Goliath's *exact intention* in issuing the challenge. The reason why he came out with full battle equipment and paraded in front of the Israelite army was because he *wanted* them to be **dismayed and greatly afraid**. Goliath was able to defeat the Israelites on fear alone.

i. In any contest, it's always useful to *demoralize* your opponent, and strike *fear* in their heart. First, it may keep you from ever going to battle with them, because they are so afraid. Second, if it does come to battle, they will fight with fear and apprehension, and so with your words, you've done a lot to win the battle before it even begins!

ii. This, of course, is a significant strategy of the devil against us. We don't battle against flesh and blood enemies like Goliath, but we have our "spiritual Giants" to battle against.

The devil has a heavy interest in making you **dismayed and greatly afraid** before the battle ever begins.

b. **When Saul . . . heard these words:** Saul had special reason to be afraid. Goliath was the giant among the Philistines, and Saul was head and shoulder taller than other Israelite men (1Sa. 9:2). Saul was the logical choice to square off against Goliath, and we can expect he knew others were expecting him to fight Goliath.

i. An old Jewish tradition says that this is part of Goliath's taunting speech: "And ye, men of Israel, what noble exploit has Saul, the son of Kish, of Gibeah, done, that ye should have made him king over you? If he be a hero, let him come down himself and fight with me; but if he be a weak or cowardly man, then choose you out a man that he may come down to me." (Cited in Clarke)

c. Yet, Saul is **dismayed and greatly afraid**.

At one time, he was known as a fierce and successful military leader (1Sa. 14:52). But that was before the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul (1Sa. 16:14). As the Spirit of the LORD left Saul, so did his courage. It shouldn't surprise us that a man filled with the Spirit of the LORD

will have the courage to fight Goliath.

i. The Spirit of the LORD really can give us courage. When we are **dismayed and greatly afraid**, it isn't the work of the Spirit of the LORD. God wants to give us a holy boldness and courage, not in ourselves, but in Him.

B. David comes to the camp of Israel.

1. (12-15) David, the youngest of eight brothers, splits his time between the palace and the pasture.

Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name *was* Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced *in years*, in the days of Saul. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle *were* Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David *was* the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

**a. David occasionally went and returned**

**from Saul to feed his father's sheep:** At this time, it seems that David was only called to the palace as needed, when Saul was afflicted by the distressing spirit.

**b. David was the youngest:** Notice that David is said to be the youngest of eight sons of Jesse. Yet Psa. 89:27 calls David God's *firstborn*, demonstrating that "firstborn" is as much a title and a concept as a description of birth order.

Therefore, when Paul calls Jesus *firstborn over all creation* in Col. 1:15, he isn't trying to say that Jesus is a created being who had a beginning. He is simply pointing to the prominence and preeminence of Jesus.

2. (16-21) David brings gifts from home and comes into Israel's camp.

And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening. Then Jesse said to his son David, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried *grain* and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp.

And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of *their* thousand, and see how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them." Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel *were* in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took *the things* and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and

shouting for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army.

**a. And the Philistine drew near and**

**presented himself forty days:** Day after day, Goliath would taunt and mock the armies of Israel, exposing them all (and especially Saul) as cowards who would run from a fight.

i. Significantly, **forty days** (or forty years) is used in the Scriptures rather consistently as a period of judgment and or



testing. It rained for forty days in the time of Noah.

Israel was in the wilderness forty years.

Jesus fasted and was tempted of the devil

for forty days before He began His public

ministry. So here, Israel is also tested by

Goliath's mockery.

b. **Left the sheep with a keeper:** This little observation shows the shepherd's heart of David. If he left the sheep to run an errand for his father, he made sure the sheep were still well taken care of.

c. **And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle:**

This must have been the approximate scene for forty days. The armies would gather on each hillside, and scream and shout at each other across the valley. Goliath would make his parade and shout his insults, and after awhile the Israelites would slink away in shame.

3. (22-24) David sees Goliath make his arrogant challenge, and sees the fear of Israel's soldiers.

And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and

greeted his brothers. Then as he talked with

them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the

armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard *them*. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.

a. **Dreadfully afraid:** *All* of the Israelite army was **dreadfully afraid**. There was not one man among them who would take on Goliath. Every one of them **fled from him** when Goliath came out.

4. (25-27) David *hears* of Saul's reward to the man who beats Goliath, but he *speaks* of God's honor.

So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall

be *that* the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption *from taxes* in Israel." Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from

Israel? For who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

And the people answered him in this manner, saying, "So shall it be done for the man who kills him."

a. **The man who kills him, the king will**

**enrich:** The situation had become so

desperate, the Saul needed to offer a bribe - a cash award, a princess, and a tax exemption -

to induce someone, *anyone* to fight and win against Goliath.

b. **Who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel . . . who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?** Other soldiers focused on the *danger* of the battle or the *material rewards* to be won. It seems that David alone focused on the reputation of **Israel** and the honor of the **living God**.

i. This truly shows David to be a man after God's own heart. He cares about the things God cares about. He saw the problem in spiritual terms, not in material or fleshly terms.

ii. When the men of Israel said, " **This man,**"

David said, " **This uncircumcised**

**Philistine.**" When the men of Israel said,

" **Surely he has come up to defy Israel,**"

David said, " **That he should defy the armies of the living God.**" When the men of Israel said, " **The man who kills him,**"

David said, " **The man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach**

**from Israel."** David saw things from the LORD's perspective, but the men of Israel saw things only from man's perspective.

5. (28-30) David is misunderstood and falsely accused by his brother.

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." And David said, "What have I done now? *Is there* not a cause?"

Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones *did*.

**a. Eliab's anger was aroused against**

**David:** We might have thought that David's visit would have pleased Eliab, especially considering all the things he brought from

home. But David's words angered Eliab, and there were many reasons why:

i. First, he was angry because he felt David was an insignificant, worthless person who had no right to speak up, especially with such bold words (**Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?** ).

ii. Second, he was angry because he felt he knew David's motivation (**I know your pride and the insolence of your heart**), but he didn't really know David's heart.

"Here he taketh upon him that which belongeth to God alone (Jer. 17:10), and judgeth David's heart by his own. Well might

Augustine say that envy is *vitium diabolicum*, a devilish vice, such as wherein is found the venom of most other vices." (Trapp) iii. Third, he was angry because he thought

David was trying to provoke someone *else*

into fighting Goliath just so that he could see a battle (**you have come down to see the battle**). Eliab himself was a tall man of good appearance (1Sa. 16:7), and he may have felt that David was trying to push *him* into battle.

iv. Finally, he was angry because *David was right!* When you are *dismayed and greatly afraid* or *dreadfully afraid*, the last thing in the world you want is someone telling you to be courageous.

**b. What have I done now? Is there not a**

**cause?** David stuck to his position. There is no doubt that what his oldest brother Eliab said *hurt* him, but he would not let it *hinder* him.

i. What helped David to handle the hurt this way? He was more concerned with God's

cause (**Is there not a cause?** ) than with his own feelings

**c. Is there not a cause?** David's attitude is completely different than the other men of Israel, including King Saul. David is concerned with God's cause before everything. Before his own personal safety, before his own personal glory, before his only personal honor, he has a passionate concern for God's **cause**. Where did David get this perspective, this courage?

i. *It had been born in secret and nursed in solitude.* David had a real relationship with God. God was as real to him as his brothers were, or even as Goliath was. "There is no short cut to the life of faith, which is the all-vital condition of a holy and victorious life.

We must have periods of lonely meditation and fellowship with God . . . Thus alone can the sense of God's presence become the fixed possession of the soul, enabling it to say repeatedly, with the psalmist, 'Thou art

near, O God.'" (Meyer)

ii. *It stood the test of daily life.* David was following the simple, humble instructions of his father. "Go take these things to you brothers," and he did just that. We often think that we must be *delivered* from the normal cares of life before we can be used of God. But God wants to use us *in and*

*through* the normal cares of life.

iii. *It bore meekly misconstruction and rebuke.* When David was misunderstood and rebuked, publicly, by his own brother, probably amid the laughs of the other

soldiers, he could have blown it. But he showed the strength of the armor of God in his life, and replied rightly. He didn't care about his glory or success, but only for the glory and success of the LORD's cause.

*Goliath was a dead man right then! This is where the battle was won!* If Eliab's hurtful words can get David in the flesh, and out of the flow of the Spirit of the LORD, then David's strength is gone. But when David ruled his spirit and answered softly, he was more in step with the Spirit of the LORD than ever. You could start digging Goliath's grave right then!

iv. "Immediately before the encounter with the Philistine he fought a battle which cost him far more thought, prudence, and patience. The word-battle in which he had to engage with his brothers and with king Saul, was a more trying ordeal to him than going forth in the strength of the Lord to smite the uncircumcised boaster. Many a man meets with more trouble from his friends than from his enemies; and when he has learned to overcome the depressing influence of

prudent friends, he makes short work of the opposition of avowed adversaries." (Spurgeon)

C. David prepares to fight Goliath.

1. (31-32) David's confident words become known to Saul.

Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported *them* to Saul; and he sent for him. Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

a. **They reported him to Saul:** David spoke boldly against Goliath. When others said, " *This man*," David said, " *This uncircumcised Philistine*." When the men of Israel said, " *Surely he has come up to defy Israel*," David said, " *That he should defy the armies of the living God*." When the men of Israel said, " *The man who kills him*," David said, " *The man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel*." (1Sa. 17:25-26) b. Now, these words of David are **reported** to Saul. It isn't as if David's words were all that bold. He never said, "Well, if I went out to fight against that Philistine, I would whip his tail. He's nothing." David didn't talk like that, but he did at least stand up to Goliath. David didn't show a lot of backbone, but he showed a lot more than anyone else in Israel, so it was worth reporting to Saul. i. Perhaps this was the most significant thing David said: " *Is there not a cause?* " (1Sa.

17:30) David was different from all the men of the army of Israel, because he saw the battle as *a cause* of the LORD.

c. **Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."** Saul had waited a long time - at least 40 days - to hear someone say these words. But to hear them now, from the mouth of this boy, almost seemed like a cruel joke. "The good news is that some one finally wants to fight Goliath. The bad news is that it is a little shepherd boy."

i. David's words to Saul almost make the matter worse. " **Let no man's heart fail because of him**" almost sounds like, "All right everyone, calm down, I've got the situation completely under control." It would have seemed ridiculous coming from this teen-age boy. It would have seemed like youthful pride and overconfidence to the extreme. But it wasn't; David really was trusting in God.

d. **Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine:**

These are bold words. This is the first time David specifically volunteers to battle Goliath. It is one thing to say, " *Someone* should do something about that." It is entirely another thing to say, " *I* will do something about that."

2. (33-37) David's training as a shepherd prepared him.

And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

a. **You are not able . . . you are but a**

**youth:** Saul thought David was disqualified because of his young age, size, and inexperience. This shows that Saul was looking at the battle purely in natural, outward terms.

The outward "tale of the tape" said there was no way David could win. The "tale of God's tape" said there was no way David could lose.

i. Even if **you are but a youth**, God can really use you. But it's up to you. Don't expect God to use you just because you are

a youth. Instead, receive what God said to

Timothy: *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

(1Ti. 4:12) Paul was telling Timothy, "Live in such a way that no one will have occasion to

despise your youth." So God can use us

when we are young, but we have to be

serious about Him and serious about our

Christian life.

b. **You are but a youth and he a man of**

**war from his youth:** Saul essentially tells David, "He's been a soldier longer than you have been alive! How could you ever overcome him?" Again, this shows that Saul is only looking at the outward, not the spiritual dimensions of this battle.

c. **Your servant has killed both lion and**

**bear:** God prepared David for this exact battle when David was a lowly shepherd. A lion would attack the lambs, and David would battle the lion. A bear would come against the sheep, and David would battle the bear. All along, God was preparing David to fight Goliath. How long did David prepare to fight Goliath? All of his life, up to that day.

i. This is generally God's pattern for

preparation. He calls us to be faithful right where we are at, and then uses our

faithfulness to accomplish greater things for Him. If David had run scared at the lion or

the bear, he would never have been ready

to fight Goliath now. But he had been

faithful then, so he will be faithful now.

ii. Wasn't this bragging? No, not at all.



"David does not conceal the fact that he had given both lion and bear their due. There is neither modesty, humility, nor truthfulness in giving the lie to the grace of God within you. A holy act should not be repudiated by its author any more than a brave boy should be disowned by his father. If you did work valiantly by the help of the Spirit of God, you did do it, and should not refuse to say so.

How are you to glorify God by denying the fruit of his Spirit?" (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

iii. *How* did David kill **both lion and bear**?

He just did it as a faithful shepherd. "When he kept his sheep and the lion came, David did not raise the question whether he could kill the lion: he killed him, and then the question was settled. When the bear came, and was about to rob him of one of his lambs, he did not say to himself, 'Have I a call to kill that bear?' Not he; but he killed him, and then he knew he was called to do it." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

iv. "When David was young in years he was old in experience, because he had watched the hand of the Lord in its dealings with him. He had not been an idler among the hills, but a worshipper, a worker, a student, a practical, living man of God . . . thus he gained his experience by the active discharge of his duty as a shepherd. He did what he was called upon to do with holy daring, and in so doing he learned the faithfulness of God. Many men have lions and bears, but no experience." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

v. "I charge you, therefore, my beloved brethren and sisters, who know the Lord, be up and in earnest to slay your lions and your bears, that you may learn how to kill your Philistines: that is to say; - serve God with all your heart, and patiently bear the cross for his name's sake, so that when the time shall come for you to stand as a lone man for Christ, you may do it gloriously, and may bring honor to your divine

Leader." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>) d. **Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine**

**will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.** David seems to be increasing in boldness as the story progresses. First, he said someone *should* fight Goliath (1Sa. 17:26, 29). Then he said he *would* fight Goliath (1Sa. 17:32). Now, he says he will *beat* Goliath!

e. **The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine:** As a shepherd facing the lions and the bears, David had no idea he was being trained to fight a giant. When we are in the midst of our preparation, we rarely see how God is going to use it. We just entrust it to Him. Yet now, David can look back and know that the same God who **delivered** him before will also **deliver** him now. David knew that God's help in times past is a prophecy of His help in the future.

i. **He will deliver me:** Do you believe it? Do you believe God will deliver you? God *will* deliver you. He has promised to get you to your destination: *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Phi. 1:6). God may **deliver** you *from* trials or **deliver** you *in the midst* of trials, but He **will deliver** you!

3. (38-40) David prepares to fight Goliath.

So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested *them*. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested *them*." So David took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a

shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine.

a. **So Saul clothed David with his armor:** Saul was still in the natural, in the flesh, in the things that are merely outward. He figured that if this boy was going to beat Goliath, he would need the best **armor** in all Israel - the armor of the king.

b. **He tried to walk . . . David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them."** Saul tried to put his armor on David, but it didn't work. It didn't work because Saul's armor did not *physically fit* David.

Everything was too big, and David could not move well with Saul's armor. Also, it didn't work because Saul's armor did not *spiritually fit* David. Armor, military technology, or human wisdom would not win this battle. The LORD

God of Israel would win this battle.

i. Often, people try to fight with another person's armor. They see God do something wonderful through someone else, and they try to copy it without really making it their own. This is never how God's work is most effectively done.

ii. David did not face Goliath unarmed. He had much better armor than Saul's. Saul had

a **bronze helmet**, but David had *the helmet of salvation* (Eph. 6:17). Saul had a **coat of mail**, but David had a *breastplate of righteousness* (Eph. 6:14). Saul had a **sword**, but David had *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (Eph. 6:17).

David had *the whole armor of God*! (Eph. 6:11).

iii. That same armor was available to Saul. At one time he had it. But now, Saul only trusted in man's armor. That's why David is going out to face Goliath, and Saul is giving advice from the sideline.

iv. Sadly, many people would say the same about the armor of God: **I cannot walk with these, because I have not tested them**. Are you more used to the weapons and armor of the flesh, or the weapons and armor of the Spirit? "Press some people to their exercise of prayer, or any other piece of the armour of God, and they must say, if they say truly, as here, I cannot do withal, for I have not been accustomed to it." (Trapp)

c. **So David took them off**: David had to *renounce* Saul's armor. He had to vow, "I will not fight with man's armor. I will trust in the LORD and His armor instead." Often we want a safe "middle ground" where we try to wear both kinds of armor. But God wants us to trust in Him and Him alone.

i. "To me, it is a pathetic thing to find so many Christians believing that the best way to bear witness for the Lord is to imitate the devil's methods, to try to resist Satan by the same kind of program and technique, ability and organization, which he himself has perfected." (Redpath)

d. **A staff in his hand . . . five smooth stones . . . a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his**

**hand:** David used the same things he had used before. These were the same tools he had used to kill the lion and the bear before. What God had used before, He would use again.

i. A charming - but purely legendary -

Rabbinical story says these five particular stones called out to David from **the brook**

and said, " *By us you shall overcome the giant!* "

ii. They were five **smooth** stones. "Had they been *rough* or *angular*, they would not have easily passed through the air, and their asperities would, in the course of their passage, have given them a *false direction*.

Had they not been *smooth*, they could not have been readily despatched from the *sling*." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>) iii. Why did David choose **five** stones? He only needed one to kill Goliath. Perhaps it was because Goliath had four brothers (1Sa.

21:18-22).

e. **And he drew near the Philistine:** This is where it mattered. David could have said the bold words, renounced Saul's armor, trusted in God's armor, and gathered his shepherd's tools.

But if he never went into the battle, what would it matter? Ultimately, David had the faith not just to talk, not just to renounce, not just to prepare, but to actually **draw near the Philistine**. That's real faith.

D. David defeats Goliath.

1. (41-44) Goliath curses David and his God.

So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *only* a youth, ruddy and good-looking. So the Philistine said to David, " *Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?*" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

a. **So the Philistine came . . . and the man who bore the shield went before him:** Obviously, because of Goliath's size and

experience, it was not a "fair" fight. But to add to even that, it was two against one! Goliath had an armor bearer with him.

b. **When the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him:** The idea

behind **looked about** is almost that Goliath had to look around to find David. David was so small compared to this man, that Goliath had a hard time even seeing him. But when he did see him, **he disdained him**. There was nothing

- *nothing* - in David that struck fear or respect in Goliath's heart. Goliath felt insulted that he had even sent David! (**Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?** ) i. When Goliath asked, " **Am I a dog?**" it was worse than it sounds. The Hebrew word for **dog** ( *kaleb* ) is used in passages like Deu.

23:18 for male homosexual prostitutes.

c. **And the Philistine cursed David by his**

**gods:** If it hadn't been established before, it is certainly settled now. This *is not a fair fight*. It isn't Goliath and his armor bearer against David.

It is Goliath and his armor bearer against David and the LORD God of Israel. The battle is over.

Anyone with any spiritual understanding could finish the story from here.

d. **Come to me:** "Bring it on, little boy!" David will be more than happy to oblige Goliath's request.

2. (45-47) David, full of faith, replies to Goliath.

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a

javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike

you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

a. **Then David said to the Philistine:** We can imagine Goliath's deep, deep, bass voice reverberating against the tall hills surrounding the Valley of Elah. It must have struck fear into the heart of every Israelite soldier, and probably even some of the Philistine soldiers! Then David answered with his teen-age voice; perhaps even with his voice cracking. The Philistines would have laughed when they heard David practically screaming in his cracking voice, and the Israelites would have been mortified.

b. **You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have**

**defied:** David makes a contrast between himself and Goliath, without giving credit to Goliath himself. "Those are some pretty fancy weapons you've got there, mister. But I've got something far better than your weapons."

i. To say, "**I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts**" is to say, "I come as a representative of the LORD of hosts, the God who has heavenly armies at His command. I am a sent man, on a mission from God."

ii. Meyer lists some characteristics of those who truly battle as representatives of God,

**in the name of the LORD:** *Their motives are pure.* Though David was accused of having evil motives, his motives were in fact pure. He was motivated by a true love for the LORD, and for the glory and honor of the LORD. *They are willing to let the LORD*

*lead the battle.* David did this at the prompting of God, not his own flesh. *They take no counsel with the flesh.* David would not wear Saul's armor. *They are willing to stand alone.* David was willing to fight all alone.

c. **This day, the LORD will deliver you into my hand:** David is bolder and bolder! It was one thing to tell *Saul* he would kill Goliath (1Sa.

17:36). It was an entirely different thing to tell *Goliath* he would kill Goliath, and to say the LORD would do it **this day**. Adding **I will strike you down and take your head from you** was a nice, emphatic touch!

i. David was careful to say **the LORD will deliver you into my hand**. David was bold, but he was bold in God, not in himself. He knew that the battle belonged to the LORD.

d. **That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel:** This whole incident made David famous. But that was not why he did it. He did it for the fame and the glory of the LORD, not his own name. He wanted **all the earth to know that there is a God in Israel**.

e. **Then all this assembly shall know:** At this point, it wasn't enough for **all the earth to know that there is a God in Israel**. *Israel needed to know that there was a God in Israel!*

They needed to know it also! Saul and the rest of the soldiers of Israel thought that the LORD only could save with **sword and spear**. They didn't really believe that **the battle is the LORD's**. David was about to give them some living proof!

f. **He will give you into our hands:** Again, notice David's humility. It isn't **He will give you into my hands**. David knows this was an "**our**" battle, but that he was fighting on behalf of all Israel. If they weren't trusting in the LORD, David would trust for them!



### 3. (48-49) David kills Goliath.

So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung *it* and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth.

#### a. **When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to**

**meet the Philistine:** What a scene! Goliath, enraged at David's boldness, **drew near** to quickly kill David. David didn't run away. He didn't hide. He didn't panic. He didn't drop to his knees and pray. Instead, **David hastened and ran . . . to meet the Philistine.**

i. David knew that the battle belonged to the LORD ( *This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand*, 1Sa. 17:46). But when Goliath ran at him, he didn't just look up into heaven and say, "O.K. LORD, now is the time to do it." David knew that it was the LORD's battle, and the LORD's victory, but that he had something he was supposed to do in the battle.

ii. Many Christians struggle at this very point. Is God supposed to do it or am I supposed to do it? The answer is, "Yes!" God does it and we do it. Trust God, rely on Him, *and then get to work and work as hard as you can!* That is how we see the work of God accomplished.

iii. "The lazy-bones of our orthodox churches cry, 'God will do his own work'; and then they look out the softest pillow they can find, and put it under their heads, and say, 'The eternal purposes will be carried out:

God will be glorified.' That is all very fine talk, but it can be used with the most mischievous design. You can make opium out of it, which will lull you into a deep and dreadful slumber, and prevent your being of any kind of use at all." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

**b. He slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face:** David had the calm hand and careful aim of someone who is really trusting in God. He used the sling -

which was a leather strap with a pouch in the middle - to hurl a stone, killing Goliath.

i. It's easy to see where this battle was won: out with the sheep of David's father. In

those lonely hours alone with the lambs,

David would talk to God and take a lot of

target practice with his sling. Now his

communion with the LORD and his skill with

the sling are both used by God! "In the use of the sling it

requires much *practice* to hit the mark; but when once this

dexterity is acquired, the sling is nearly as fatal as the

musket or bow." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>) ii. Everyone else

thought, "Goliath is so big, I can't beat him." David thought,

"Goliath is so big, I can't miss him." "A man of less faith

might have been too nervous to take the proper aim."

(Balikie)

**c. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face:** Just as the Philistine god Dagon had fallen on his face before the LORD

(1Sa. 5:2-5), so now the worshipper of Dagon

falls on his face, being struck in the forehead.

i. Trapp calls the forehead, "The seat of pride and impudency; there being no other

part of Goliath capable of danger; the rest of him was defenced with a brazen wall. This was the Lord's own work, and it is justly marvelous in our eyes."

4. (50-54) David beheads Goliath and Israel romps over the Philistines.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But *there was* no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. Now the men of

Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. Then the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents. And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

a. **David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it:** First, David *made certain the job was dead*. You can't mess around with sin or your spiritual enemies; you must kill them *dead*.

Second, David used Goliath's *own sword* to cut off his head.

i. At a later time, David would write in Psa.

57:6: *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen.* God loves to use the devil's own plan to entrap him!

b. **When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.** Hadn't they agreed before (1Sa. 17:9) that if their champion lost, they would

surrender to Israel? But they didn't. We should never expect the devil to live up to his promises. But the soldiers of Israel pursued and defeated the Philistines. David's example had given them great courage and faith in the LORD.

i. David never read 1Ti. 4:12, but he lived

it: *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* David led by example, and led Israel to a great victory.

c. **David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent:** Since it was many years later that Jerusalem was conquered (2Sa. 5:6-10), it is likely that this means David *eventually* brought Goliath's head to Jerusalem. But David will use the sword of Goliath later (1Sa. 21:9).

David had some enduring reminders of God's great work.

i. "Presumably David had the head pickled and hung it in his banqueting hall after he had captured Jerusalem." (Ellison)

ii. "I wish that young men here would aspire to brave lives for the God of Israel. I would that for truth, and goodness, and the eternal glory, they would be ready to rise to the measure of their destined hour. Why should we all be mean men? Is there not room for a few downright devoted beings, who will lift their hand unto the Lord, and never go back? If self-sacrifice is wanted, let us make it. If some one is needed for a heathen land, or to bear testimony for truth in this almost apostate nation, let us cry, 'Here am I! Send me!' God's David will not hang back through cowardly fear or dread of consequences, but will take up his place as God shall help him, and say, like Martin Luther, 'I can do no other: so help me, O my God.'" (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

d. David did it! He conquered the giant Goliath.

Are there impossible victories God has waiting for you, if you will be like David?

i. "Ah," one says. "That was fine for David.

But you don't know the trouble I've seen."

Let Spurgeon answer you: "'Ah, you do not know my trouble, dear sir!' True, my dear

friend, and you do not know mine, and I am

not going to tell you. It would not comfort

you if I told you my distresses; and it

certainly would not comfort me if you told

me all your airings, and moanings, and

sighings. I expect that we have each to

suffer the best trouble that could have been

appointed us. If you had my cross it would

be an unsuitable burden for you; and if I

had yours, it would be a grievous load for

me."

5. (55-58) Saul meets a victorious David.

When Saul saw David going out against the

Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army,

"Abner, whose son *is* this youth?" And Abner said, "As your

soul lives, O king, I do not know." So the king said, "Inquire

whose son this young man *is*." Then, as David returned from

the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought

him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him,

"Whose son *are* you, young man?" So David answered, "I *am*

the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

a. **Inquire whose son this young man is:** Does this mean that Saul did not recognize David, even though David had played for Saul in the palace, to soothe the king when the distressing spirit came upon him (1Sa. 16:14-23)?

i. Perhaps Saul did recognize David, and he was simply asking about David's family

background (**inquire whose son this young man is**). After all, Saul had promised his daughter to the man who killed Goliath, and Saul wanted to know something about his future son-in-law.

ii. Or, it may be that Saul indeed did not recognize David. Some think that David played behind a screen or a curtain for Saul, and so Saul never saw his face. Others think that Saul was influenced by the distressing spirit at this time, and not entirely in his right mind. We also know that David had not spent all his time at the palace. He also would go home and tend the sheep, presumably for extended periods (1Sa. 17:15). It's possible that David's appearance changed during a time when he was away from Saul, so Saul didn't immediately recognize him. When Saul calls David a **young man**, the word means someone who is full grown, mature, and ready to marry.

b. David won a great victory, but not greater than the victory Jesus won on our behalf.

David's victory over Goliath is a "picture in advance" of the victory Jesus won for us.

i. Both David and Jesus represented their people. Whatever happened to the representative would happen to God's people also.

ii. Both David and Jesus fought the battle on ground that rightfully belonged to God's people, ground that they had lost.

iii. Both David and Jesus fought when their enemy was able to dominate the people of God through fear and intimidation alone.

iv. Both David and Jesus were sent to the

battleground by their father (1Sa. 17:17).

v. Both David and Jesus were scorned and rejected by their own brethren.

vi. Both David and Jesus fought the battle without concern with human strategies or conventional wisdom.

vii. Both David and Jesus won the battle, but saw that their enemies did not then give up willingly.

viii. Both David and Jesus fought a battle where the victory was assured even before it started.

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Saul and the Israelite army assembled and camped in the valley of Elah, where they arranged their battle lines to fight against the Philistines. **3** The Philistines were standing on one hill, and the Israelites on another hill, with the valley between them.

**4** Then a champion came out from the camp of the Philistines. His name was Goliath; he was from Gath. He was close to seven feet tall. **5** He had a bronze helmet on his head and was wearing scale body armor. The weight of his bronze body armor was five thousand shekels. **6** He had bronze shin guards on his legs, and a bronze javelin was slung over his shoulders. **7** The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the iron point of his spear weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer was walking before him.

**8** Goliath stood and called to Israel's troops, "Why do you come out to prepare for battle? Am I not the Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose for yourselves a man so he may come down to me! **9** If he is able to fight with me and strike me down, we will become your servants. But if I prevail against him and strike him down, you will become our servants and will serve us." **10** Then the Philistine said, "I defy Israel's troops this day! Give me a man so we can fight each other!" **11** When Saul and all the

Israelites heard these words of the Philistine, they were upset and very afraid.

**12**

Now David was the son of this Ephrathite named Jesse from Bethlehem in Judah. He had eight sons, and in Saul's days he was old and well advanced in years. **13** Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to war. The names of the three sons who went to war were Eliab, his firstborn, Abinadab, the second oldest, and Shammah, the third oldest. **14** Now David was the youngest. While the three oldest sons followed Saul, **15** David was going back and forth from Saul in order to care for his father's sheep in Bethlehem.

**16** Meanwhile for forty days the Philistine approached every morning and evening and took his position. **17** Jesse said to his son David, "Take your brothers this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread; go quickly to the camp to your brothers. **18** Also take these ten portions of cheese to their commanding officer. Find out how your brothers are doing and bring back their pledge that they received the goods. **19** They are with Saul and the whole Israelite army in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

**20** So David got up early in the morning and entrusted the flock to someone else who would watch over it. After loading up, he went just as Jesse had instructed him. He arrived at the camp as the army was going out to the battle lines shouting its battle cry. **21** Israel and the Philistines drew up their battle lines opposite one another.

**22** After David had entrusted his cargo to the care of the supply officer, he ran to the battlefront. When he arrived, he asked his brothers how they were doing. **23** As he was speaking with them, the champion named Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, was coming up from the battle lines of the Philistines. He spoke the way he usually did, and David heard it. **24** When all the men of Israel saw this man, they retreated from his presence and were very afraid.



**25** The men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who is coming up? He does so to defy Israel. But the king will make the man who can strike him down very wealthy! He will give him his daughter in marriage, and he will make his father’s house exempt from tax obligations in Israel.”

**26** David asked the men who were standing near him, “What will be done for the man who strikes down this Philistine and frees Israel from this humiliation? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he defies the armies of the living God?” **27** The soldiers told him what had been promised, saying, “This is what will be done for the man who can strike him down.”

**28** When David’s oldest brother Eliab heard him speaking to the men, he became angry with David and said, “Why have you come down here? To whom did you entrust those few sheep in the desert? I am familiar with your pride and deceit! You have come down here to watch the battle!”

**29** David replied, “What have I done now? Can’t I say anything?” **30** Then he turned from those who were nearby to someone else and asked the same question, but they gave him the same answer as before. **31** When David’s words were overheard and reported to Saul, he called for him.

**32** David said to Saul, “Don’t let anyone be discouraged. Your servant will go and fight this Philistine!” **33** But Saul replied to David, “You aren’t able to go against this Philistine and fight him! You’re just a boy! He has been a warrior from his youth!”

**34** David replied to Saul, “Your servant has been a shepherd for his father’s flock. Whenever a lion or bear would come and carry off a sheep from the flock, **35** I would go out after it, strike it down, and rescue the sheep from its mouth. If it rose up against me, I would grab it by its jaw, strike it, and kill it. **36** Your servant has struck down both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them. For he has defied the armies of the living God!” **37**

David went on to say, “The LORD who delivered me from the lion and the bear will also deliver me from the hand of this Philistine!” Then Saul said to David, “Go! The LORD will be with you.”

**38** Then Saul clothed David with his own fighting attire and put a bronze helmet on his head. He also put body armor on him. **39** David strapped on his sword over his fighting attire and tried to walk around, but he was not used to them. David said to Saul, “I can’t walk in these things, for I’m not used to them.” So David removed them.

**40** He took his staff in his hand, picked out five smooth stones from the stream, placed them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag, took his sling in hand, and approached the Philistine.

**41**

The Philistine kept coming closer to David, with his shield bearer walking in front of him. **42** When the Philistine looked carefully at David, he despised him, for he was only a ruddy and handsome boy. **43** The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you are coming after me with sticks?” Then the Philistine cursed David by his gods. **44**

The Philistine said to David, “Come here to me, so I can give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the field!”

**45** But David replied to the Philistine, “You are coming against me with sword and spear and javelin. But I am coming against you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel’s armies, whom you have defied! **46** This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand! I will strike you down and cut off your head. This day I will give the corpses of the Philistine army to the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the land. Then all the land will realize that Israel has a God **47** and all this assembly will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves!

For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will deliver you into our hand.”

**48** The Philistine drew steadily closer to David to attack him, while David quickly ran toward the battle line to attack the Philistine. **49** David reached his hand into the bag and took out a stone. He slung it, striking the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank deeply into his forehead, and he fell down with his face to the ground.

**50**

David prevailed over the Philistine with just the sling and the stone. He struck down the Philistine and killed him.

David did not even have a sword in his hand. **51** David ran and stood over the Philistine. He grabbed Goliath's sword, drew it from its sheath, killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they ran away.

**52** Then the men of Israel and Judah charged forward, shouting a battle cry. They chased the Philistines to the valley and to the very gates of Ekron. The Philistine corpses lay fallen along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. **53** When the Israelites returned from their hot pursuit of the Philistines, they looted their camp. **54** David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put Goliath's weapons in his tent.

**55**

Now as Saul watched David going out to fight the Philistine, he asked Abner, the general in command of the army, "Whose son is this young man, Abner?" Abner replied, "As surely as you live, O king, I don't know." **56**

The king said, "Find out whose son this boy is!"

**57** So when David returned from striking down the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul. He still had the head of the Philistine in his hand. **58** Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" David replied, "I am the son of your servant Jesse in Bethlehem."

**1** When David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan and David became bound together in close friendship. Jonathan loved David as much as he did his own life.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 18:1-30

## **1 Samuel 18 - Conflict Between Saul and David**

A. David, Jonathan, and Saul.

1. (1-4) The friendship between David and Jonathan.

Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go

home to his father's house anymore. Then

Jonathan and David made a covenant, because

he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that *was* on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

a. **When he had finished speaking to Saul:** When David finished the "after-killing-Goliath"

conversation with Saul, his fame and renown in Israel was assured. He had performed a remarkably heroic deed, and was initially received by the leadership of Israel.

b. **The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul:**

We have met Jonathan, the son of Saul, before in 1 Samuel. He is the remarkably brave man of faith who initiated a one-man war against the Philistines (1 Samuel 14).

i. Jonathan was a lot like David. They were approximately the same age, though Jonathan was probably at least five years older. They both were bold, they both were men of great trust in God, and they both were men of action. Most of all, they both were men who had a real relationship with God.

ii. At the same time, Jonathan and David were different. Jonathan was the first-born

son of a king (1Ch. 9:39), and David was the last-born son of a farmer. This made Jonathan more than a *prince*, he was *the crown prince*. Jonathan would, by *everyone's expectation*, be the next king of Israel.

c. What was it that **knit** their souls together?

Notice that it happened *after* David **had finished speaking to Saul**. Jonathan heard David give an extended explanation of his heart, his faith in the living God, and Jonathan *knew* that he and David had the same heart. They could not be such close friends until Jonathan knew that about David.

i. Most people long for true, deep friendships, but give little heed to how they select their friends. Jonathan chose David for a friend because his words to Saul revealed David's heart - and it was heart full of love, and trust, and joy in God. Probably, at that moment he heard David speaking to his father King Saul, God spoke to Jonathan's heart and said, " *This* one will be the next king of Israel."

ii. "No doubt but David spake much more than is here expressed, abasing himself, and exalting God, as sole Author of the victory over Goliath." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>) iii. The way most people think, Jonathan was the one who had the most to fear from David's success. Yet he loved David, because what they had in common - a real relationship with the LORD God - was bigger than any difference.

d. **Saul took him that day**: David would never again be "just" a shepherd. David still had a shepherd's heart, but never again would he *only* be a shepherd.

e. **Then Jonathan and David made a**

**covenant:** Jonathan, by all human expectation, would be the next king. David was anointed by the LORD, through the prophet Samuel, to be the next king. Yet they **made a covenant** of friendship that would prove stronger than jealousy, stronger than envy, stronger than ambition.

i. Trapp on **made a covenant:** "Hebrew, Cut a covenant; for the covenanters first swear, and then cut a beast in twain, passing between the parts thereof, and wishing so to be cut in pieces if ever they falsified."

f. **Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his**

**belt:** When Jonathan gave David **the robe** and **his armor**, he said, "You will be the next king of Israel. You should be dressed and armed as the crown prince. God's hand is one you, and these rightfully belong to you." Because Jonathan surrendered to God, he could see the hand of the LORD upon David. He knew David's destiny, and was perfectly willing to set aside his ambition to honor the LORD's choice.

i. "In our political world, where power plays such an important role, what would be thought of a prince who voluntarily renounced his throne in favour of a friend whose character and godly faith he admired?" (Baldwin)

g. For his part, David *received* **the robe** and Jonathan's **armor**. But he did not then say or think, "Good Jonathan. We all see who is boss around here. Now get out of my way because I'm going to replace your father as soon as I can." It would be some *20 years* until David took the throne of Israel and replaced Saul. If Jonathan was ready to recognize David as God's choice for the next king, David was willing to let *God* put him on the throne, and in *God's* timing. Both of these men were thoroughly submitted to the LORD!

i. David couldn't receive Saul's armor. It didn't fit him physically, but more importantly it didn't fit him spiritually. He and Saul lived for, and were trusting in, different things. But David could receive Jonathan's armor, not only because they were more similar in size. More importantly, they shared the same **soul**. They both loved God, and lived more Him and for others more than themselves. David and Jonathan

both knew that if the circumstances were reversed, David would do the exact same thing for Jonathan - because they had the same **soul**.

ii. If the issue of "who will be the next king?" were not settled in the hearts of Jonathan and David, they could never have had this kind of close love and friendship. They loved each other more than the throne of Israel, because they loved the LORD more than the throne of Israel.

h. The story of Jonathan and David shows many enduring principles about real love, love on a human level, and love between God and us.

i. Real love wants a commitment, and commitment will show itself in a covenant.

ii. Real love will not hide its covenant or commitment.

iii. Real love will give and receive gifts.

iv. Real love will clothe the poor with the robes of royalty.

v. Real love will give armor to fight with.

i. Some people read a homosexual relationship into the love between David and Jonathan. They suppose that two men can not love each other without it being what the Bible clearly says is immoral. But the relationship between David

and Jonathan shows that the Bible doesn't condemn real love between men, only a sexual relationship between men.

## 2. (5-9) Saul's jealousy of David.

So David went out wherever Saul sent him, *and* behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. Now it had happened as they were coming *home*, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *only* thousands. Now *what* more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

### a. **David went out wherever Saul sent him,**

**and behaved wisely:** David was fully

submitted to Saul, and sought to serve Saul

**wisely** in every way. David knew the way to be blessed was to work hard to be a blessing to his boss, King Saul. He would not undercut Saul's position or authority in any way.

i. Where did Saul send David? **Saul set him over the men of war.** This is a remarkable promotion - a man not older than his young twenties is now a "general" in the army of Israel.

b. **He was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants:** David quickly becomes popular, both among **the people** and among the leaders (**Saul's servants**). This was not because David was a yes-man-people-pleaser-sycophant kind of man. David did not *seek* this popularity at all, and certainly did not depend on *any* of those carnal tools. David became popular because



he was a *man after God's own heart* and people could see the *love*, the *wisdom*, and the *peace* of God in him.

i. We might imagine that Saul's initial reaction was positive. "Good," he thought.

"My new assistant is well received. Everyone will think I made a brilliant choice in bringing him on staff. This is working out well."

c. But David had just *begun* to be popular.

When the people of Israel started singing, **Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands**, both David and Saul knew David was more popular than Saul was.

i. When **women** sing and dance in your honor, you are popular. When it happens in **all the cities of Israel**, you are popular.

This song was the number one hit in Israel!

d. How did David react to this sudden popularity? He received it well, because 1Sa.

18:14 says of this period in David's life, *And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him*. In this environment of praise and popularity, David *behaved wisely in all his ways*.

i. When you are praised and popular, it isn't *wise* to let it go to your head. David was no doubt happy to hear these affirming words, but he didn't let it dominate his thinking or *change* his opinion of himself. He kept the heart and the mind of a shepherd, even in a season of great success.

ii. This wasn't easy. This was a test, one that the devil wanted to use to bring David down, and one that the LORD wanted to use to build David up. David never received this kind of affirmation when he was keeping the sheep. The sheep never danced and sang a song praising him! Now David faces the challenge of success. Many people who could handle adversity well enough fall under the challenge of success.

iii. But because David could be so content, and so happy before the LORD in keeping sheep with no praise or popularity, it put his heart in the right place to handle it when he received praise and popularity. Out in the shepherd's field, David had his heart set:

"I'm doing this for the LORD. I love the LORD, and my reward is from Him." Because his heart was right in the shepherd's field, David *behaved wisely in all his ways* when praise and popularity came.

iv. We also see this by David's reaction to the scorn and criticism from his brother Eliab (1Sa. 17:28-30). When Eliab gave David the *opposite* of scorn and criticism, David didn't like it, but it didn't crush him. It didn't deter him. Most people are corrupted by praise and popularity to the same degree they are

crushed by scorn and criticism. Because of what God built in him out in the shepherd's field, David could live his life more for the LORD than for people. It wasn't that David didn't care about people or what they thought, but he could put the opinion of man in the right perspective because he cared more about the opinion of God.

e. **Then Saul was very angry:** Knowing his character, we are not surprised by Saul's reaction. Saul did not have a right relationship, or a close relationship, with the LORD. All he had to affirm his heart was the praise of man, so when David was more praised than he, it really bothered Saul.

i. It is a bad sign in a leader when they resent or feel threatened by the success of one of their subordinates. It is a certain sign of weakness in that leader.

ii. **Now what more can he have but the**

**kingdom?** This is a typical kind of over-reaction seen in the proud and insecure.

Saul could have thought, "David has done well, and he has his glory today. I'll keep serving the LORD and I'll have this kind of praise and popularity another day." Instead, he over-reacts, and says " **Now what more can he have but the kingdom?** "

iii. However, there is another dynamic at work in Saul: a guilty conscience. He remembered the prophet Samuel told him, "*The LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.*" Saul knew his sin had disqualified him from being king, and he was hanging on to the throne in the energy of his flesh. An honorable man would have stepped down, but if Saul were an honorable man, he wouldn't be in this mess! Instead, Saul constantly worried, "When will God cast me off the throne? Who will He raise up to replace me?" This insecurity, borne of guilt, also made Saul over-react to the praise and popularity given to David.

iv. And what an over-reaction! The crowds *did* praise Saul. They *did* sing, " **Saul has slain his thousands.**" What's wrong with that? Isn't it enough to slay **thousands**? For Saul, it wasn't enough as long as someone else was slaying **his ten thousands**.

v. In fact, Saul should have been *grateful!*

Saul was treated *better* than he deserved, and he still resented it! He was angry "without cause: for as Chrysostom observeth, the women ascribed to Saul more than he deserved, - for he suffered the Philistine to vaunt himself forty days together, and yet cowardly sat still." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

f. **So Saul eyed David from that day**

**forward:** Now Saul's mind is filled with suspicion towards David. He will begin to hear most everything David says with suspicious ears. He will look at most all David's actions with suspicious eyes. His thoughts about David will be twisted by suspicion.

i. "He gave way to that devilish vice of envy, which was henceforth as a fire in his bosom, as a worm continually gnawing upon his entrails . . . He looked upon him with an evil eye: prying into all his actions, and making the worst of everything." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

ii. "Among the most terrible of human sins is jealousy - the parent of the darkest and blackest crimes that have disgraced the annals of our race." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>) iii. We can know that when a person in power has this mind and this heart against a person like David, it is going to be hard for David. But God will use it! God wasn't on vacation when all this was going on in Saul's mind. God had the power to either change Saul's mind, or take him out of the way. But God allowed it all to do a special work in David and to accomplish His eternal purpose. We want to say to David, "Look out! Danger ahead! But trust in God, because He is still in control."

B. Saul's first attempt to kill David.

1. (10) The scene in Saul's royal court.

And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played *music* with his hand, as at other times; but *there was* a spear in Saul's hand.

a. **And it happened on the next day:** Saul had a suspicious heart towards David, and his suspicious heart lays the foundation for this attempt to kill David's.

b. **The distressing spirit from God came**

**upon Saul:** This **distressing spirit** was first mentioned in 1Sa. 16:14. It came upon Saul, permitted by the LORD, when the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul (1Sa. 16:14). David

was brought into Saul's royal court to play music, so that Saul would be ministered to and soothed when suffering from the **distressing spirit**.

c. **And he prophesied inside the house:** Why would a **distressing spirit** make Saul *prophesy*? Saul wasn't speaking from the LORD

at all, and **prophesied** is a bad translation here. The Hebrew grammar used here can be used of idle ravings as well as of prophecy from the LORD. Saul was simply babbling like a man not in his right mind.

i. "He was *beside himself*; made *prayers, supplications*, and incoherent *imprecations*: 'God preserve my life,' 'Destroy my enemies,'

or such like prayers, might frequently escape from him in his agitated state. The Arabic

intimates that he was actually possessed by an evil spirit, and tht through it he uttered a sort of demoniacal predictions." (Clarke

<Clarke.htm>)

d. **So David played music with his hand:** The same hands that had killed Goliath, and carried the trophy of his severed head, were

now sweetly playing music unto the LORD, ministering to a king troubled by a distressing spirit!

i. David obviously had skillful *hands*, both in war and in music ministry. But what *a humble heart* David has! Most men, after the fame that came to David, would consider this

kind of service "beneath" them. David was a general in the army, famous in all Israel, and had women dancing and singing his praises. Yet he will perform this job of personally ministering to Saul in music.

e. **But there was a spear in Saul's hand:** David held a harp, and **played music with his hand**. But there was violence **in Saul's hand**.

He held a spear. What a contrast between David and Saul!

2. (11) Saul throws a spear at David.

And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

a. **And Saul cast the spear:** If a spear is in your hand, you'll probably use it! As Saul held that spear, the *distressing spirit* moved upon him, and instead of receiving ministry from David's music, the *distressing spirit* prompted Saul to strike out at David.

i. We must say that the *distressing spirit* did not "make" Saul do this. But the spirit *prompted* it. Saul was able to choose, "Will I do this or not?" and he chose to **cast the spear**.

ii. This same music ministry once soothed Saul, and made him *refreshed and well*, giving him relief from the *distressing spirit* (1Sa. 16:23). Now, it is of no effect at all, and Saul even responds to David's music ministry with a murder attempt! What has changed? Was it David's music, or David's heart? No, it was Saul. Saul refused to receive from David's ministry, and that refusal set the stage for this kind of violence.

b. **For he said, "I will pin David to the wall with it."**

This wasn't an accident. As we will see, there's little doubt that Saul wanted it to seem like an accident. Though he wouldn't admit it, his heart was set on finishing off David.

He didn't want to just frighten David, or wound David. When you want to **pin David to the wall**, you want the spear to

deliver a fatal blow, completely through the body.

c. **But David escaped his presence:** Saul threw the spear, and it missed David. Perhaps Saul's aim was bad, affected by his poor mental and emotional state. Perhaps David saw the spear and ducked. Perhaps God simply supernaturally guided the spear to miss.

However it happened, the spear missed and lay on the floor. And what did David do? **David escaped his presence.**

i. Of most of us, it would be written, "And so-and-so picked the spear up off the floor, went over to Saul, and said, 'If Goliath couldn't scare me, you sure can't. If Goliath couldn't kill me, you sure can't.' And with one thrust of the spear, so-and-so pinned Saul to the wall."

ii. But David didn't pick up the spear. He didn't throw it back. He simply **escaped his presence**. No one could blame David if he struck back; it could easily be called self-defense. But David had a different heart. It wasn't a matter of what he could get away with, but it was a matter of what God's heart wanted. David was determined to leave the situation in God's hands, and not *take* the throne himself. *God* would have to take care of Saul, because David wouldn't do it!

iii. Why? Was it because David lacked courage? No, he demonstrated his courage in the battle against Goliath. You can bet that if almost anyone else had thrown a spear at David, he would have picked it up and killed the man who tried to kill him. But David knew the principle of Rom. 13:1

before it was ever written: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.* David said, "LORD, you put Saul on the throne. And I know

I'm supposed to be the next king, because You have given me Your promise and Your anointing. But getting Saul out of the way is Your business. I won't touch it, because he is an authority appointed by You. You started his reign, so *You* have to end it."

iv. Let Saul act in the flesh. Let Saul take matters into his own hands. Let Saul throw spears. David will have none of it. David will trust the LORD. In doing so, David will not

only dodge the spear that could end his life.

David will also dodge the spear that could ruin his *soul*. When one is pinned to the wall with a physical spear, blood pours out and you die. When one is pinned to the wall with

an intangible spear, bitterness pours out and you die. *David dodged both kinds of spears.*

v. Gene Edwards, in his wonderful book *Tale of Three Kings*, says that David understood something that few of even the wisest men in David's day understood, and even fewer today. David understood that "God did not have, but wanted very much to have, men who would live in pain. God wanted a broken vessel."

d. **But David escaped his presence twice:** Perhaps the most remarkable word in this chapter is **twice**. This means that *Saul threw the spear twice*. This means that *Saul missed twice*. This means that *after the first miss, David came back and played again!*

i. This is where many of us will draw the line. "Look, I'll sit with the bulls-eye on my chest once, and I'll dodge the spear. I'll even leave the spear on floor and resist the temptation to throw it back. But one spear whizzing by my head is enough. One miss and I've paid my dues. Once is submission



to the LORD. Twice is stupidity!"

ii. We might even say that David's submission didn't even begin until he sat back down to play for Saul *again* after the first attempt on his life. Now he knew the danger, now he knew Saul's heart, and *now* he had to trust God.

iii. What was at stake? What would have happened if David had struck back after resisting that temptation the first time? We can suppose that David still would have become king. We can suppose that we still would be admiring David's heart in not throwing the spear back the first time, and we would have understood how he struck back the second time. But if David would have done this, he would have *surrendered his destiny to be the greatest king of Israel*.

He still would be a king, but not *the king* the LORD destined him to be.

iv. "In doing this small feat of returning thrown spears, you will prove many things.

You are courageous. You stand for the right.

You boldly stand against the wrong. You are tough and can't be pushed around. You will not stand for injustice or unfair treatment.

You are the defender of the faith, the keeper of the flame, detector of all heresy. You will not be wronged. All of these attributes then combine to prove that you are also obviously a candidate for kingship. Yes, perhaps you are the Lord's anointed. *After the order of King Saul.*" (Gene Edwards, *Tale of Three Kings*) 3. (12-16) David is transferred from the palace to the army.

Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came

in before the people. And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD *was* with him. Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

a. **Now Saul was afraid of David, because**

**the LORD was with him:** Saul had the spear, but because David would not pick the spear up off the floor, David had the LORD. *Saul knew he was outmatched.* All the spears in the world couldn't defeat David, **because the LORD was with him.** Somehow, Saul knew all this, and it made Saul **afraid** of David.

i. By all outward appearance, Saul is in control. Saul has the throne. Saul has the army. Saul has the spears. Yet Saul was **afraid of David because the LORD was with him.**

b. But it wasn't only that **the LORD was with** David. It was also that the LORD **had departed from Saul.** This made Saul

uncomfortable with David, and made it hard for Saul to have David around (**Therefore Saul removed him from his presence**).

c. In all this, Saul **made him his captain.** Here is your promotion, David! But Saul's desire was not to bless David, but to set him up for harm.

Saul's jealousy has made him manipulative, working a hidden, secret agenda on David.

i. "This was under pretence of doing him honour, when it was in effect only to rid

himself of the object of his envy." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

ii. "This seeming preferment was indeed a persecution; for hereby David, being

valorous and venturous, was exposed to no small danger in fighting against the enemies.

Uriah lost his life by such means." (Trapp  
<Trapp.htm>)

d. **David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him:** It isn't easy to behave wisely when spears are being thrown at you. It isn't easy to behave wisely when you are put out of the palace. It isn't easy to behave wisely when you have powerful and determined enemies. But even in the midst of all those terrible circumstances, you can behave wisely in all your ways as **the LORD is with you**.

i. Again, it says Saul was **afraid of him**.

Why wasn't Saul happy that David **behaved very wisely**? Because Saul's wisdom and David's wisdom were very different. Saul was wise when it came to spears. David was

wise when it came to trusting God. David's wisdom seemed like foolishness to Saul, but it was real wisdom from God and something in Saul knew it and was **afraid** of it.

e. **But all Israel and Judah loved David:** Because God was with David, he became even more popular. David was tempted to use this popularity as a spear against Saul, but because he **behaved wisely in all his ways**, he refused.

i. "If only jealous people would ponder such a story as this, surely they would see the uselessness of their malignant attempts to injure those who may seem destined to take their place. It is not thus that the peril can be met." (Meyer  
<Meyer.htm>)

f. **Because he went out and came in** is a Hebrew figure of speech meaning, "David conducted successful military operations." God's hand of success was with David, even though

Saul was against him. Saul might attack and pain David in any number of ways, but God

would not allow Saul to have the victory.

i. *David was never a victim.* He *looked* like a victim, because he was attacked. When there are spears stuck in the wall behind

you, and laying about on the floor, you sure

look like a victim! But David **behaved**

**wisely in all his ways**, so he did not give into the victim's state of mind, thinking that *his fate was in the hands of the one attacking him*. David knew his fate was in God's hands, and could have peace in that.

C. Saul sets a trap for David but he escapes and is blessed.

1. (17-19) Saul intends to kill David.

Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife.

Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord's

battles." For Saul thought, "Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." So David

said to Saul, "Who *am* I, and what *is* my life *or* my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

a. **Here is my older daughter Merab**: Saul had promised to *give . . . his daughter* to the man who killed Goliath (1Sa. 17:25). Now, Saul makes good on the promise, offering his **older daughter Merab** to David.

b. This *seemed* like a gesture of kindness and goodness on Saul's part. David was supposed to believe, "Saul has forgiven. He has let bygones be bygones. He threw two spears at me before, but all of that is over now." But Saul wasn't thinking that way at all. In his heart was a different motive: **Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.**

i. How would taking Merab in marriage bring the Philistines against David? Because of the dowry that Saul would demand. In that day,

a dowry was required whenever a man married. The dowry would be paid to the bride's father, and the more important and prestigious the bride and her family, the higher the dowry price would be. The purpose of the dowry was twofold. First, it compensated the bride's family for the loss of a family "worker." Second, the father held a dowry as life insurance or "alimony in advance." That is, if the husband died or divorced his wife, and she had to go back to her father's household, there would be something to support her. Since David was a man from a humble family, there was no way he could pay the monetary value for a daughter of a king. Saul knew this, and would demand that David kill 100 Philistines as a dowry. Saul figured that the job was too big and dangerous for David, and he would be killed gaining the dowry to marry a king's daughter.

ii. Saul still wanted David dead and gone. But now, instead of throwing spears himself, he will use cunning and manipulation to have David killed. He thought, "The Philistine spears and swords are just as sharp as mine. I can let them do the work for me." From a fleshly standpoint, this was a pretty smart plan on Saul's part!

iii. It was smart in the flesh, but God would not honor Saul's manipulation. Manipulation uses hidden agendas and concealed motives. It is sneaky and secretive. Manipulation tries to maneuver people and events to accomplish this hidden agenda. It can be smart in the flesh, but will never be blessed by God.

c. **Only be valiant for me, and fight the**

**LORD's battles:** Saul is working as a clever manipulator. He takes advantage of David's loyalty and patriotism (**only be valiant for me**). He takes advantage of David's courage and heart for the LORD (**fight the LORD's battles**).

i. In the flesh, Saul could even justify his manipulation. "I *do* want David to **be valiant for me**. I *do* want David to **fight the LORD's battles**. There is nothing wrong in me asking for those things." But that was dishonest, not because it was an outright lie, but because it didn't tell the whole truth. Sure, Saul wanted David to **be valiant** for him and to **fight the LORD's battles**. But more than that, he wanted David *dead*. That was his greater motivation than anything else was.

d. **So David said to Saul, "Who am I . . . that I should be son-in-law to the king?"**

David was not out-maneuvering Saul. David had no idea what was going on in Saul's heart.

David simply had a humble heart before the LORD, and God protected him against Saul's manipulation.

i. The question " **Who am I?** " shows David's humble heart. He was nationally famous. All Israel loved him. All Saul's staff loved him.

The crown prince Jonathan loved him. All over Israel, women sang and danced in his honor. Yet when the hand of Merab is offered to David, he doesn't think, "Well, this is about time. I'm glad someone noticed."

ii. There was a time when Saul had a humble heart also. When Samuel first told him God had chosen him to be king, he said " *Why then do you speak like this to me?* " (1Sa. 9:21). But that was a long time ago for Saul, and now his heart is hardened in pride.

iii. The Bible says *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*. It says it three times! (Pro. 3:34, Jam. 4:6, and 1Pe. 5:5) God was showing His grace to the humble heart of David by protecting David.

iv. Though *God* could see Saul's thoughts, David could not. And if he suspected it and confronted Saul, we can bet Saul would

have denied it all. In the flesh, by all outward appearance, David is at a tremendous disadvantage. But as he kept a humble heart before the LORD, God protected him.

**e. At the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to**

**David, that she was given to Adriel:** When David was initially hesitant to marry Merab, Saul tried another strategy. He suddenly gave her to another man, to try and make David angry or jealous.

i. David could have thought, "This was my woman to marry. She was promised to me because I beat Goliath. This was my way to marry into the royal family and get closer to the throne. This isn't fair!" And it wasn't fair.

But the LORD had his hand in it and was watching out for David.

ii. Saul "treacherously withdrew the offer as the time of nuptials approached - the intention being to arouse his ardent spirit to retaliate, and so become liable to the charge of treason. But all his efforts failed to arouse even a transient impulse for revenge." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

iii. "This was an act of great injustice and perfidiousness; and accordingly this marriage was accursed by God, and the children of it were by God's appointment cut off, 2 Samuel 21." (Poole)

iv. "This affront and disgrace was done to David purposely to provoke him (as is probable) to do or say something that might bring him under censure, and give Saul some colour to cut him off. But David was too hard for him that way too: leaving it to God to right his wrongs." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

v. The plan failed. If David was angry or vengeful at losing Merab to another man, he just gave it to the LORD and went on. Since this didn't succeed, we should understand this as a warning to Saul. In this failed plan, God told Saul, "Your manipulation will not work. My hand is on David. Stop trying to kill him or have him killed." Would Saul listen?

2. (20-25) David's agreement to marry Michal.

Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. So Saul said, "I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today." And Saul commanded his servants, "Communicate with David secretly, and say, 'Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'" So Saul's servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you *a light thing* to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I *am* a poor and lightly esteemed man?" And the servants of Saul told him, saying, "In this manner David spoke." Then Saul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

a. **Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved**

**David:** Saul was happy to hear this (**the thing pleased him**). It doesn't surprise us that Michal was attracted to



David, because of his character, qualities, and fame. But as is evident later in David's marriage to Michal, she was not really attracted to David's heart for the LORD.

b. **That she might be a snare to him:** This may be meant in two ways. First, obviously Saul wanted David to be snared by the dowry. But it may also be that Saul knew Michal's character and heart, and knew that she would be snare for him as a wife, as turned out to be the case in some regard (2Sa. 6:16-23).

c. **Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today."**

Saul did not receive God's warning. He is rushing through the warning signs God gave him. He tries this manipulative plan again.

d. **Communicate to David secretly:** See how this reeks of manipulation! It is all about behind-the-back secret communication. It is all about hidden agendas and clever traps (**the king has delight in you**). But David still responded with humility (**I am a poor and lightly esteemed man**).

i. How could David say, "**I am a poor and lightly esteemed man**"? Because David didn't believe all his press clippings. Because David knew there was a difference between *fame* and being truly **esteemed**. Because David was always more focused on where he was before God than where he was in the opinion polls.

e. **The king does not desire any dowry but**

**one hundred foreskins of the Philistines:** Now, Saul builds on his clever plan. "David won't marry Michal because he doesn't have a big enough dowry. He's too humble to ask me

for terms, so I will suggest them." Even the way he phrases it is clever: "**The king does not desire any dowry.**" That makes it sound like Saul doesn't want anything from David. "**But one hundred foreskins of the Philistines.**"

That makes it sound like Saul isn't asking for much, when he is really asking for something

far greater than a lot of money. He asks David to put his life in great jeopardy, because Saul wants him dead!

i. Even the specific request - **one hundred foreskins of the Philistines** - was manipulative. It was designed to goad David

on ("Go get those uncircumcised

Philistines"). It was designed to be difficult, because the Philistines would obviously have

to be dead. And it was designed to make the

Philistines completely outraged at David,

because from their perspective, not only

were their men killed, but their dead bodies

were desecrated.

ii. "Here is a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

3. (26-27) David fulfills Saul's request for a dowry and marries Michal.

So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired; therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.

a. **It pleased David well:** David has such a pure, humble heart that he seems to be blind to Saul's manipulation and cunning. How can a simple man like this ever survive? Because God is with him!

i. Again, notice David's humble heart. Many

men would have said, "Dowry? You want a

dowry? You promised to give your daughter

to the man who killed Goliath. If you want to see my dowry,

go look at the ten-foot grave

in the Valley of Elah. That's enough of a

dowry. I demand my rights!"

**b. Therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of**

**the Philistines:** What did David do with Saul's attempt at manipulation? He took control of the situation by being a humble servant, and by giving *more* than what was required.

i. We often think that being a humble

servant and being in control contradict each other. We wrongly think that if you are a humble servant, then you must be at the mercy of events. But the example of Jesus, who was completely in control (always submitting that control to God the Father), yet always a humble servant shows us differently.

ii. Jesus told us how to take control in this kind of situation. *If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.* (Mat. 5:40-41) In this, Jesus showed how to take command of evil impositions by making a deliberate

choice to give more than we are required.

Roman law commanded Jews to carry the pack of any Roman soldier, but *only* for one mile. Jesus is saying "Go beyond the one mile required by law and give another mile out of a free choice of love." This is how we change someone's attempt to manipulate us into our free act of love.

iii. The only limit to this kind of sacrifice is the limit that love itself will impose. It isn't love to give into someone's manipulation without our transforming it into a free act of love. It isn't always love to give what is demanded.

**c. And David brought their foreskins, and**

**the gave them in full count to the king:** There are many times we wish we had a visual Bible, or could see Biblical events exactly as they happened. This is one instance where we

are happy the Bible is not illustrated.

4. (28-30) David's constantly growing popularity.

Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him; and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David's enemy

continually. Then the princes of the Philistines went out *to war*. And so it was, whenever they went out, *that* David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.

a. **Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD**

**was with David:** Having this understanding, how did Saul react? Did he stop trying to kill David, and leave it all in the LORD's hands? Did he find it in his heart to respect David, and make a way for the LORD's choice to smoothly come to the throne? No. The closer David got to the LORD, the further he got from Saul, and so **Saul was still more afraid of David.**

i. How tragic! **So Saul became David's**

**enemy continually.** He **knew that the LORD was with David**, yet because Saul was making himself the enemy of the LORD,

he was also the enemy of David. It didn't

*have* to be like this, but Saul's heart was set on this destructive course.

b. **Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war:** Saul's cunning plan against David continues. No doubt, **the Philistines went out to war** against David in retaliation for what they felt was a terrible disgrace against the Philistine people. Saul wanted to make David a marked man, and he succeeded.

i. On a human level, David had a lot more to

fear from Saul than he did from the

Philistines! But David wasn't walking on a

human level. He was walking in the Spirit,

walking with the LORD. So the LORD kept

him safe from both the "attack you right up front" enemies like the Philistines, and kept him safe from the "manipulate and stab you in the back" enemies like Saul.

c. **David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became**

**highly esteemed:** Saul's plan has completely backfired. David is not only alive, but more popular and closer to the LORD than ever. But Saul isn't finished, and will use more manipulation, cunning, and outright violence to attack David.

i. David's wise behavior and high esteem were both closely connected to his humble heart. The same is true (in a far greater sense) of the Son of David, Jesus Christ. Phi.

2:9 says of Jesus, *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.* Why was it that the **name** of Jesus **became highly esteemed**? *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* (Phi. 2:5-8) This mind, this heart, was in David. This mind, this heart, is in Jesus. God wants this mind, this heart, to be in each of us.

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Saul retained David on that day and did not allow him to return to his father's house. **3** Jonathan made a covenant with David, for he loved him as much as he did his own life. **4** Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with the rest of his gear, including his sword, his bow, and even his belt. **5** On every mission on which Saul sent him, David achieved success. So Saul appointed him over the men of war. This pleased not only all the army, but also Saul's servants.

**6** When the men arrived after David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women from all the cities of Israel came out singing and dancing to meet King Saul.

They were happy as they played their tambourines and three-stringed instruments. **7** The women who were playing the music sang, "Saul has struck down his thousands, but David his tens of thousands!"

**8** This made Saul very angry. The statement displeased him and he thought, "They have attributed to David tens of thousands, but to me they have attributed only thousands. What does he lack, except the kingdom?" **9** So Saul was keeping an eye on David from that day onward.

**10** The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul and he prophesied within his house. Now David was playing the lyre that day. There was a spear in Saul's hand, **11** and Saul threw the spear, thinking, "I'll nail David to the wall!" But David escaped from him on two different occasions.

**12** So Saul feared David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. **13** Saul removed David from his presence and made him a commanding officer.

David led the army out to battle and back. **14** Now David achieved success in all he did, for the LORD was with him.

**15** When Saul saw how very successful he was, he was afraid of him. **16** But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he was the one leading them out to battle and back.

**17**

Then Saul said to David, "Here's my oldest daughter, Merab. I want to give her to you in marriage. Only be a brave warrior for me and fight the battles of the LORD."

For Saul thought, "There's no need for me to raise my hand against him. Let it be the hand of the Philistines!"

**18** David said to Saul, "Who am I? Who are my relatives or the clan of my father in Israel that I should become the king's son-in-law?" **19** When the time came for Merab, Saul's daughter, to be given to David, she instead was given in marriage to Adriel, who was from Meholah.

**20** Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul about this, it pleased him. **21** Saul said, "I will give her to him so that she may become a snare to him and the

hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So Saul said to David, “Today is the second time for you to become my son-in-law.”

**22** Then Saul instructed his servants, “Tell David secretly, ‘The king is pleased with you, and all his servants like you. So now become the king’s son-in-law.’” **23** So Saul’s servants spoke these words privately to David.

David replied, “Is becoming the king’s son-in-law something insignificant to you? I’m just a poor and lightly-esteemed man!”

**24** When Saul’s servants reported what David had said, **25** Saul replied, “Here is what you should say to David: ‘There is nothing that the king wants as a price for the bride except a hundred Philistine foreskins, so that he can be avenged of his enemies.’” (Now Saul was thinking that he could kill David by the hand of the Philistines.) **26** So his servants told David these things and David agreed to become the king’s son-in-law. Now the specified time had not yet expired **27** when David, along with his men, went out and struck down two hundred Philistine men. David brought their foreskins and presented all of them to the king so he could become the king’s son-in-law. Saul then gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

**28** When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, **29** Saul became even more afraid of him. Saul continued to be at odds with David from then on. **30** Then the leaders of the Philistines would march out, and as often as they did so, David achieved more success than all of Saul’s servants. His name was held in high esteem.

**1** Then Saul told his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David. But Saul’s son Jonathan liked David very much.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 19:1-24

### ***1 Samuel 19 - David Flees from Saul***

*Psalm relevant to this chapter: Psalm 59.*

A. Jonathan defends David before his father Saul.



1. (1a) Saul plots the murder of David, attempting to enlist the help of Jonathan and his servants.

Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

a. After David killed Goliath, and was honored among the people for this, everything changed in his relationship with Saul. 1Sa. 18:9 says, *So Saul eyed David from that day forward*. And since that time, Saul has repeatedly attacked David, with one persistent goal: to eliminate him.

i. Twice, Saul tried to kill David by pinning him to the wall with a spear as David played music for Saul (1Sa. 18:11).

ii. Saul offered his oldest daughter Merab to David as a trap, hoping the dowry he would arrange would result in David's death (1Sa. 18:17).

iii. Saul tried to lead David into the sin of rebellion or treason by suddenly giving Merab to another man when she was promised to David (1Sa. 18:19).

iv. Saul tried to put David in a place where the Philistines would kill him, in demanding a dowry of 100 Philistine foreskins for marriage to his other daughter, Michal (1Sa. 18:21-25).

v. None of this worked, but none of it changed Saul's heart. 1Sa. 18:29 says, *Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David's enemy continually*.

b. Now, Saul persists in his efforts to eliminate David. **Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David**. David was a marked man, and Saul's staff was instructed to kill him.

c. What a difficult place for **Jonathan his son**! Jonathan loved David, and God had made a wonderful bond of friendship between them, sealed by a covenant (1Sa. 18:1-4). Jonathan

knew that David was destined to be the next king of Israel, even though Jonathan himself was officially the crown prince. At the same time, his father and king tells him to kill David!

i. We can see Saul quoting Scripture to

Jonathan: "Jonathan, the Bible says *Honor your father and mother* in Exo. 20:12. I'm your father and your king. You must submit to me as father and king. Go kill David. You are in the perfect place to do it, because he trusts you. God has put you in that place so you can obey me now!" Was Jonathan supposed to submit?

d. What a difficult place for the **servants** of Saul! They all loved David ( *he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants*, 1Sa. 18:5). Yet they are commanded by their king to kill David.

i. What of Saul's servants? Trapp says they were, "Great admirers of David, but now cold friends at best; not one of them speaks for him, and not a few of them are ready to act against him."

e. What a difficult place for **David**! Who can he trust? Even if he said, "I can trust Jonathan; I know he would never betray me." Surely, he knows there is at least one sycophant on Saul's staff who would do whatever Saul said, without regard to right or wrong.

2. (1b-3) In loyalty to David, Jonathan warns David.

But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David. So Jonathan told David, saying, "My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret *place* and hide. "And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you *are*, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you."

a. **But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted**

**much in David:** We can know that Saul, and at least some on Saul's staff, had criticized David a lot. They looked for any chink in David's armor they could find. They looked for anything they could to bring against him, and if they could find nothing, they would twist or exaggerate something to make it seem something. You

know Jonathan got an earful of this, but it didn't change his opinion of David. He still **delighted much in David**.

b. **So Jonathan told David:** This would have made Saul furious, but Jonathan knew he was doing right.

i. How could Jonathan justify disobeying his father? Because Saul, his father and king, commanded him to do something that was clearly disobedient to God. This was an easy one, because Jonathan knew the Bible said, *You shall not murder* (Exo. 20:13). Jonathan didn't have to spiritualize the meaning of murder, or consider this just a matter of

disagreement. The Bible was clear, and Saul was *on record* as saying *that they should kill David* (1Sa. 19:1).

ii. We *are* under authority, and commanded to submit to God's order of authority in many different arenas. There is a Biblical,

commanded submission from children to their parents, from citizens to their government, from employees to their employers, from Christians to their church leadership, and from wives to their husbands. Yet, even in all of those relationships, we are never excused from sin because we obeyed an authority that told us to sin. In this instance, it would have been wrong for Jonathan to obey his father and kill David.

iii. This was a case where Jonathan could

say what the apostles said when they were told to stop preaching the gospel: *We ought to obey God rather than men* (Act. 5:29).

But Jonathan also had the heart of the apostles in Acts 5; they were beaten severely, and were willing to take their lumps for what was right before God, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name (Act. 5:40-41). Jonathan was willing to take his lumps for his obedience to God, and not whine about it.

c. **My father Saul seeks to kill you.**

**Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and**

**hide:** Jonathan did more than refuse to help Saul. He *helped* David. Jonathan could have said, "Look, I want no part of this. I'm not going to help my father do something I know is wrong. But I won't try to stop it either. I'll just be neutral and let God work it out." But Jonathan didn't take that attitude.

i. Certainly, that is right attitude to take sometimes. The Bible does say that we should *aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business* (1Th. 4:11). It is easy to get mixed up in things that are none of our business. But it is also wrong to stay "neutral" when God doesn't want you to. It took courage for Jonathan to take David's side in this matter, but he did. We often let others down because we lack the kind of courage Jonathan had.

ii. What made Jonathan put himself on David's side? He **delighted much in David**. He trusted David, and was behind him all the way. He knew God was with David, so he wanted to be supporting David also.

iii. Do you wish someone would stick up for

you like this, would love you, and be **delighted much** in you? Jesus Christ is **delighted much** in you. Not because of who you are or what you have done, but because He is full of grace and love and you have received it.

3. (4-5) In loyalty to David, Jonathan speaks to Saul.

Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works *have been* very good toward you. For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw *it* and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?"

a. **Now Jonathan spoke well of David to**

**Saul his father:** Jonathan did more than secretly help David with information. He **spoke well of David to Saul his father**. Jonathan let Saul know, "Father you have a certain opinion of David. But I don't share that opinion. I love and support David. You should also." That took a lot of courage, but it was the right thing for Jonathan to do.

i. It was wonderful for Jonathan to support David secretly, when it was just him and David. That itself was a gift. It was another thing for Jonathan to support David before others, and before those who were against David. But that is what supporting someone is really all about. You can't measure a person's support by what they say about you to your face. You measure their support by how they back you when you aren't around.

ii. " *Jonathan spake good of David*, which he could not do without hazard to himself.

Herein therefore he performed the duty of a true friend, and of a valiant man." (Poole

<biblio.htm>)

b. **Let not the king sin against his servant:** Jonathan was bold enough to tell his father that his anger and jealousy against David was **sin**, and to say, " **he has not sinned against you.**"

Saul *felt* that David had sinned against him in some manner and he *felt* righteous in his cause.

But Jonathan delivers a needed word of correction.

c. **For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great salvation for all Israel:** Why did Jonathan remind Saul of these events? It wasn't because Saul had forgotten them. It was because Saul "spun" these events with a meaning that justified his jealous desire to murder David.

i. Saul knew that David **killed the Philistine**. But Saul could not believe that David did it for a righteous reason. In his mind, he thought "David did it just to become famous and to take my throne. He's a grasping traitor. I'm justified in killing him, because I have to kill him before he kills me!"

ii. Jonathan is trying to bring Saul back to reality. He reminds his father: " **You saw it and rejoiced.**" "When David first killed Goliath, you **rejoiced** just like everyone.

Now Satan has filled your mind with envy and jealousy. Go back to how it first was in your mind."

d. **Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?** Again, in Saul's mind, *there was a cause*. In Saul's mind, David was not *innocent*. But the truth was that he was **innocent**, and there was no **cause** to kill him. Jonathan is calling Saul back to this reality.

4. (6-7) The reconciliation between Saul and David.

So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed."

Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these things. So Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

a. **So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan:** This took real humility for Saul. It would have been easy to say, "I'm the king and I'm right. I don't care what you say." But in this case, Saul **heeded the voice of Jonathan.**

b. **Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed."** This shows that the LORD had genuinely touched Saul's heart. God used Jonathan, but it wasn't the work of Jonathan. It was the work of the LORD, and Saul recognized by declaring this oath.

i. Knowing the end of the story, this seems like a pretty hollow promise. But Saul was more accurate than he perhaps knew. It was totally true that **as the LORD lives, he shall not be killed.** But that was no credit to Saul, who kept trying to kill David!

ii. "And it is very likely Saul now spoke as he thought. But if good thoughts look at any time into a wicked heart, they stay not there, as those that like not their lodging. The flashes of lightning may be discerned in the darkest prisons, but they are soon gone thence again: so here." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

c. **So Jonathan brought David to Saul and he was in his presence as in times past:** It seems to have all worked! The command to kill David is revoked. Saul and David are together again as in the "good old days."

5. (8-10) David escapes another attempt on His life.

And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him. Now the distressing

spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing *music* with *his* hand. Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall.

So David fled and escaped that night.

a. **And there was war again:** In context, this speaks of more war between Israel and the Philistines. But it was also true spiritually. At the end of 1Sa. 19:7, there was a truce in the

spiritual war involving David and Saul. But

whenever we are at a time of cease-fire in the spiritual war, we know the battle will begin

again before long. It can always be said of our lives, **and there was war again.**

b. **David went out and fought with the**

**Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him:** Spiritually, these are warning clouds of a coming storm. It was David's success that aroused Saul's jealousy before. When David was successful

again, surely Saul would be tempted to jealousy again. What would Saul do with that temptation?

c. **Now the distressing spirit from the**

**LORD came upon Saul:** Evil spirits were more than ready to attack Saul where he was most vulnerable. The attack was on the way; what

would Saul do with this spiritual attack?

d. **Saul . . . sat in his house with his spear in his hand:**

Saul is in a bad place. He is tempted and spiritually attacked, and now he has put himself in a potentially sinful situation.

David was **playing music with his hand**, but Saul knew spears much better than music that praised God.

e. **Then Saul sought to pin David to the**



**wall with the spear:** Here we go again! What happened to Saul's change of heart? What happened to his oath that David would not be killed? All of that was thrown away as easily as the spear was thrown. But it didn't "just happen." Saul was unprepared to handle temptation, unprepared to handle spiritual attack, and had the opportunity to sin close at hand. Most people will trip up under those circumstances!

**f. But he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall.** David was gone, but the spear remained.

The thing Saul *didn't* need - the spear - was left.

The one Saul really *did* need - David - was gone. Saul was a loser on both counts.

i. Remember 1Sa. 19:8: **And there was**

**war again.** Saul lost the war, and lost it completely. But David won the war when **he slipped away from Saul's presence.** Saul has just made another determined effort to kill him, and David could have returned the spear with fury. But David said what he said before: "LORD, you put that man on the throne. If he is going to be removed, You are going to have to do it, because I won't."

**h. So David fled and escaped that night:** David never returned to the palace until he was king of Israel - some 20 years later! From now until the day Saul dies and David is crowned, David lives his life as a fugitive.

i. David was probably scared, angry, and hurt when he left the palace. "LORD, I thought you would protect me. How could I have been so stupid? Where was Jonathan when I needed him? I should have killed Saul. I can't believe I passed up the chance." But if David thought any of those things, he did not cling to them.

ii. How could God allow this? It seems so unfair. It was unfair, from a human level. But God needed to make David into a man of God, so He allowed it. Saul meant it for evil, but the LORD meant it for good. God is big enough to work all things together for good in your life also.

B. David flees from Saul.

1. (11-12) David escapes with the help from his wife Michal. Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped.

a. Previously, Saul *swore*, "*As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed.*" (1Sa. 19:6). Now, for the second time, Saul goes back on that oath. He now sends "hit men" to **David's house to watch him and to kill him.**

b. But **Michal, David's wife** saves the day.

Michal was Saul's daughter, so this was a conflict of loyalties for Michal. Should she act in her father's interests or in her husband's interests? Here, she makes the right choice and supports her husband David.

i. Michal is acting according to the principle of Gen. 2:24: *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Though the Genesis passage speaks specifically of the husband, it expresses a principle that applies to both partners in a marriage: that the former family loyalties and obligations take a back seat to the loyalty and obligation to the new family.

c. Michal helped by *warning* David. She perhaps saw the "hit men" coming before he did, and she also knew the character of her father better than David did. Michal was probably less

surprised than David was to find "hit men" from Saul against him.

i. David did well to receive this warning from his wife. Sometimes men are so hard headed and so hard hearted that they never hear how God might warn them through their wives. If David would have ignored this warning because he didn't like the source, he might have ended up dead.

ii. At the same time, Michal spoke to David wisely: **If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.**

She might have said, "David here's the problem let me tell you what to do." She might have said, "David I am here to save your life. Let me tell you what to do."

Instead, she simply told David, "This is what I see. Now it is up to you. I'm not going to try to save your life, but the way I see it, if **you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.**"

d. Michal helped by letting **David down through a window**. As David decided on a course of action, she was there to support and help him put it into practice. Michal's help was successful, because David **fled and escaped**.

e. During this night, when men watched his house and David escaped, he composed a song unto the LORD, found in Psalm 59. The introduction of that Psalm says, *when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.*

i. In Psalm 59, David takes his case before God: *Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those rise up against me.* (Psa. 59:1)

ii. In Psalm 59, David describes his attackers: *They lie in wait for my life . . .*

*they growl like a dog . . . they belch out with their mouth; swords are their lips. (Psa.*

*59:3, 6-7)*

iii. In Psalm 59, David declares his innocence: *Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD. They run and prepare themselves through no fault of mine. (Psa.*

*59:3-4)*

iv. In Psalm 59, David expresses his trust in God: *You, O LORD, shall laugh at them . . .*

*my merciful God shall come to meet me.*

*(Psa. 59:8, 10)*

v. In Psalm 59, David ends with triumphant confidence in God: *But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.*

*To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defense, My God of mercy.*

*(Psa. 59:16-17)*

vi. It shows a man or a woman after God's own heart to *sing* unto the LORD at a time like this time in David's life!

2. (13-17) Michal deceives the men who came to kill David. And Michal took an image and laid *it* in the bed, put a cover of goats' *hair* for his head, and covered *it* with clothes. So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He *is* sick."

Then Saul sent the messengers *back* to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' *hair* for his head. Then Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?'"

a. **Michal took an image:** The **image** was a *teraphim*, a figurine used as a household idol, or as a fertility and good luck charm. In ancient Israel, *teraphim* were intended as helps in worshipping the true God. They didn't think of the *teraphim* as other gods, but as representing the LORD God of Israel.

i. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, also had *teraphim* (called *household idols* in Gen.

31:19). The would-be priest Micah used *household idols* in his corrupt worship of God (Jdg. 17:5). In 1Sa. 15:23, when

Samuel said to Saul, " *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry,*" the word *idolatry* is the word *teraphim*. In the godly reforms of Josiah, he prohibited the use of *household idols* (1Ki. 23:24).

ii. Clearly, God's people had no business having or using an **image** like this. We can't imagine that this **image**, this *household idol*, belonged to David; so it shows that Michal's didn't have the kind of relationship with God she should have. And, this weak relationship with God will show up in Michal

as the story of David's life unfolds (2Sa.

6:16-23). "When we read of these images we are not surprised by the defects of character which we see in Michal." (Balikie <biblio.htm>)

iii. Saul probably knew something of this character of his daughter Michal, and that is one reason why he gave her to David as wife: *I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him* (1Sa. 18:21).

b. Saul doesn't seem to be taken in by his daughter's deception. She said David was sick, but Saul said **"Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him."** This also shows something of the depth of hatred Saul had

for David, because he wanted to deliver the death-blow himself (**bring him up to me . . . that I may kill him**).

c. **He said to me, "Let me go! Why should I kill you?"**

Michal was faithful to David with her *actions*, but not with her *words*. She told Saul that David had threatened to kill her, and that is why she let him escape.

i. Michal said this to protect herself. Perhaps she felt that she had to paint herself as the victim so that her father wouldn't kill her also. If this is the case, it is hard to be judgmental towards Michal; she has just seen her husband escape as a fugitive, she doesn't know if he will live or die or when she will see him again, and she may fear for her own life. At the same time, it is hard to honor Michal as she protects herself by lying about her husband, and painting him as a man who would cold-bloodedly murder his wife.

ii. It may be that Michal, from beginning to end, acted in her self-interest. She helped David because she wanted to do something against her father. When Saul asked "**Why have you deceived me like this?**" she might have honestly replied, "Because I was looking for an occasion to stick it to you, Dad!" Knowing Saul's weak character and relationship with the LORD, it wouldn't surprise us to have such a messed-up family. But when it came down to it, she picked defending herself instead of supporting her husband.

d. **My enemy**: These are the saddest words in this passage. Saul, when describing David, calls him **my enemy**. David was really Saul's friend, and David had done more to help Saul than just about anyone else. David was only the **enemy** of Saul because Saul *wanted* to see him that way.

C. David, pursued by Saul, flees to Naioth.

1. (18) David visits Samuel at Ramah.

So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.

a. **Went to Samuel at Ramah and told him**

**all that Saul had done to him:** David did the right thing when in a difficult and confusing situation. He spent some time with a godly man.

We can imagine David pouring out his heart to the prophet: "Samuel, you anointed me king, and look at what is happening! I guess it isn't time yet, but why is it so hard? Does God want me dead? Why is the LORD allowing this?"

b. **Stayed in Naioth:** The word **Naioth** comes from the Hebrew word for *residence*. This may be speaking of Samuel's home (which may have had "**Naioth**" title itself), or it may have been some landmark or specific place in Ramah.

Whenever **Naioth** is mentioned, it is associated with Ramah.

2. (19-21) Saul sends messengers to capture David, but they are touched by the Holy Spirit and prophesy in the presence of Samuel and other prophets.

Now it was told Saul, saying, "Take note, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah!" Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as* leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise.

Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

a. **Saul sent messengers to take David:** Saul is wicked, but persistent. We can never admire the devil's work, but we can admire the devil's work ethic.

b. **When they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as**

**leader over them:** When the messengers of Saul came to capture David, they came in the middle of a worship meeting. Samuel and his

"students" (**the group of prophets**) were waiting on the LORD, worshipping Him, speaking to the LORD and hearing from Him.

i. When it says that they were all

**prophesying**, it isn't that they were all predicting the future. The Hebrew word simply has the idea of speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were probably all giving spontaneous and inspired praise to God.

c. **The Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also**

**prophesied:** They were caught up in the atmosphere of worship and devotion to God,

and the **Spirit of God came upon** them.

i. Why did the Holy Spirit do this? These were not men who were seeking diligently after God, longing to be filled with the Spirit.

Then why did the Holy Spirit come upon them? First, because God was protecting David, and this was His way of "disarming" those who came to capture David. We can just imagine the messengers coming, and seeing David with Samuel the prophet and all the other students of Samuel. They are having a worship meeting, and God's Spirit is wonderfully poured out. The messengers thought, "This will be easy! Look at how defenseless David is! Look at how distracted

he is! And none of these prophets can stop us!" But the Spirit of the LORD had other plans, and *protected* David. The Holy Spirit knows how to protect us!



The *safest* place for us to be in the whole world is *walking in the Spirit*.

ii. Second, this was the Holy Spirit's warning to these men and to Saul. It is as if the Spirit said "I don't want David captured. I am sending these men home empty handed.

Instead of seeking to kill David, you should seek to be filled with the **Spirit of God**."

d. **He sent other messengers**: When the first messengers returned home empty handed and reported to Saul what happened, Saul didn't get the message. So, **he sent other messengers**, but the same thing happened: **they prophesied likewise**. Saul still didn't get the message, so he **sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also**.

i. How long until Saul listens to the Holy Spirit? Three sets of messengers come back, and God says the same thing each time through them.

3. (22-24) Saul pursues David himself, but he also prophesies in the presence of Samuel and the prophets.

Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that *is* at Sechu. So he asked, and said, "Where *are* Samuel and David?" And *someone* said, "Indeed *they are* at Naioth in Ramah." So he went there to Naioth in Ramah.

Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, " *Is* Saul also among the prophets?"

a. **Then he also went to Ramah**: Three times, the Holy Spirit said to Saul, "Leave David alone. My Spirit is stronger than you are. You will never win this battle against Me and against David." But Saul didn't listen.

Instead, to an even greater degree, Saul took matters into his own hands: **he also went to Ramah.**

**b. Then the Spirit of God was upon him**

**also:** Why did the Holy Spirit come upon Saul?

For the same reasons He came upon the messengers Saul sent to capture David. First, to prevent David's capture. Second, to tell Saul, "Hands off My servant David. I am in charge here."

i. There may have been an additional message to Saul in this: "Saul, you are prophesying now, speaking beautiful words of praise and wonder to Me. This is how I could work in you all the time if you were humble and willing."

**c. He also stripped off his clothes and**

**prophesied:** The Spirit prompted Saul to do this as an expression of deep humility. Saul would not humble himself before God, and so God *will* find a way to humble him.

i. It is unlikely - though possible - that Saul stripped himself bare. The Hebrew word for

**naked** can mean that a person has just stripped themselves down to their undergarments. Probably, Saul took off all of his royal robes that said "prestige" and "royalty," and laid himself out before the LORD in his plain linen undergarments. It was a way for the LORD to say, "You really aren't a king any more, Saul. I've stripped you of your royal glory."

ii. Does this seem extreme? It is always extreme when God humbles us. That's why God counsels us to humble *ourselves* instead of "making" Him do it: *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.* (1Pe. 5:6)

iii. God showed much grace to Saul by putting him in a place where it would be easy to repent, easy to return to the LORD, and easy to stop his backsliding. He was right there! The LORD could not have made it any easier! Yet Saul still had to make a *choice* to surrender to the power of God.

iv. A person can be *affected* by the power of God (resulting in amazing experiences), but not *surrendered* to the power of God, which results in a change of life.

d. **Is Saul also among the prophets?** This phrase was first mentioned in 1Sa. 10:10-12, and it expressed astonishment that someone had become a religious fanatic. As some used to say of someone who was not a religious person who became very religious, "He got religion?"

Saul was an unspiritual man who became very spiritual at the time when the Spirit of the LORD came upon him.

e. The chapter ends with Saul's plan completely frustrated. When David first came to Samuel, he probably thought he was really vulnerable there.

"Samuel, Saul is after me! I need a sword! I need protection! I need soldiers! I need a

guard!" The old prophet could have told David,

"What you really need to do is worship the LORD and wait on Him. Let's have a prayer

meeting!" And David was indeed safe waiting on the LORD and worshipping Him.

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** So Jonathan told David, "My father Saul is trying to kill you. So be careful tomorrow morning. Find a hiding place and stay in seclusion. **3** I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are. I will speak about you to my father. When I find out what the problem is, I will let you know."

**4** So Jonathan spoke on David's behalf to his father Saul. He said to him, "The king should not sin against his servant David, for he has not sinned against you. On the contrary, his actions have been very beneficial for you. **5**

He risked his life when he struck down the Philistine and the LORD gave all Israel a great victory. When you saw it, you were happy. So why would you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death for no reason?"

**6** Saul accepted Jonathan's advice and took an oath, "As surely as the LORD lives, he will not be put to death." **7**

Then Jonathan called David and told him all these things.

Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he served him as he had done formerly.

**8** Now once again there was war. So David went out to fight the Philistines. He defeated them thoroughly and they ran away from him. **9** Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul. He was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing the lyre. **10**

Saul tried to nail David to the wall with the spear, but he escaped from Saul's presence and the spear drove into the wall. David escaped quickly that night.

**11** Saul sent messengers to David's house to guard it and to kill him in the morning. Then David's wife Michal told him, "If you do not save yourself tonight, tomorrow you will be dead!" **12** So Michal lowered David through the window, and he ran away and escaped.

**13** Then Michal took a household idol and put it on the bed. She put a quilt made of goat's hair over its head and then covered the idol with a garment. **14** When Saul sent messengers to arrest David, she said, "He's sick."

**15** Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed so I can kill him."

**16** When the messengers came, they found only the idol on the bed and the quilt made of goat's hair at its head.

**17** Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me this way by sending my enemy away? Now he has escaped!"

Michal replied to Saul, "He said to me, 'Help me get away or else I will kill you!'"

**18** Now David had run away and escaped. He went to Samuel in Ramah and told him everything that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went and stayed at Naioth. **19** It was reported to Saul saying, "David is at Naioth in Ramah." **20** So Saul sent messengers to capture David. When they saw a company of prophets prophesying with Samuel standing there as their leader, the spirit of God came upon Saul's messengers, and they also prophesied. **21** When it was reported to Saul, he sent more messengers, but they prophesied too. So Saul sent messengers a third time, but they also prophesied. **22**

Finally Saul himself went to Ramah. When he arrived at the large cistern that is in Secu, he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" They said, "At Naioth in Ramah."

**23** So Saul went to Naioth in Ramah. The Spirit of God came upon him as well, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth in Ramah. **24** He even stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel. He lay there naked all that day and night. (For that reason it is asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets?")

**1** David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my offense? How have I sinned before your father? For he is seeking my life!"

Guzik - 1 Samuel 20:1-42

### ***1 Samuel 20 - Jonathan's Final Attempt to Reconcile His Father and David***

A. David, coming from Naioth, meets Jonathan.

1. (1-4) David asks Jonathan about Saul's intentions towards him; Jonathan promises his help to David.

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What *is* my iniquity, and what *is* my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?" So Jonathan said to him, "By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small

without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? *It is not so!*"

Then David took an oath again, and said, "Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly, *as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.*" So Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you yourself desire, I will do *it* for you."

a. **Then David fled from Naioth:** Why? Why did David leave Naioth? The Spirit of God

protected David there in a powerful way. He could have simply stayed there for however long it took Saul to give up or die. Yet David left for a good reason: He wanted to know if Saul's heart had changed, and if there was still a chance to reconcile with King Saul.

b. When David left, he went to see his close friend **Jonathan**. Jonathan was Saul's son, and the crown prince of Israel. Everyone thought he would be the next son - everyone except David and Jonathan. Jonathan knew that David was called by God to be the next king, and he was willing to step aside so that he would not be resisting the will of the LORD.

c. **What have I done?** We should see in this that David is testing Jonathan's loyalty. Of course, he wants to know what *Saul* thinks, but even more important to David is to know what *Jonathan* thinks. In asking, " **What have I done?** " David wants to know if Jonathan has come to a place of agreement with his father Saul.

d. **So Jonathan said to him, "By no means!"** This assures David that Jonathan is still his loyal friend, and that Jonathan hasn't bought into Saul's lies about David. Jonathan also assures David that he will protect him, by warning David of Saul's intentions.

i. **Why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!** Apparently, David wondered why Jonathan didn't tell him

about the attempted arrest at Naioth.

Jonathan expresses astonishment that his father did not tell him, but assures David of his heart towards him.

ii. Why did Jonathan seem slow to believe that his father still wanted to kill David? "For Jonathan gave credit to his father's oath,

chap. xix. 6; and the worthiest minds are least suspicious and most charitable in their opinions of others." (Poole <biblio.htm>) e. **There is but a step between me and death:** This reveals David's *discouragement*. He knows that Saul has attempted to kill him many times, and it seems that Saul will not quit until David is gone. David feels that his death is inevitable, and that he is walking on a slippery plank over a great canyon.

i. "Poor David found the doing of anything or of nothing dangerous alike; such was the malice of his enemy, who was captain of the devil's sworn swordmen." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

f. **Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you:** Jonathan continues to reassure David, bringing encouragement to a discouraged man.

i. Jonathan's approach is to *encourage* David and to *offer help* to him. Conceivably, he could have said, "Where is your faith, brother? Why aren't you just trusting God?"

Instead, Jonathan knew David's heart was pointed in the right direction, and he just offered *to help*.

2. (5-11) David proposes to test Saul's attitude.

And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow *is* the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third *day* at evening. If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked *permission* of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all

the family.' If he says thus: ' *It is well,*' your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" But Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?" Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what *if* your father answers you roughly?" And Jonathan said to David, "Come, and let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field.

a. **If your father misses me:** David asks Jonathan to observe Saul's reaction to David's absence at an important feast held monthly for the high officials of state. Apparently, Saul hoped that David would be at this feast as expected, and David wondered how Saul would react to his presence. Would he take the opportunity to reconcile with David? Or, would he take the opportunity to kill him?

i. **The New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat:** Special sacrifices were commanded for the new moon (Num. 28:11-15).

b. **If there is iniquity in me:** Again, David seems somewhat shaken by the fact that Jonathan did not tell him about the attempted arrest at Naioth. David is asking Jonathan, "Am I in the wrong here? Are you still behind me?"

Essentially, David says "If you really are working for your father, and agree with him that I deserve to die, then just kill me right now!"

i. We have to see all of this from David's perspective. He remembers that Jonathan's support for him is challenged by the fact



that *his father* is against David. He also remembers that Jonathan's support for him is challenged by the fact that Jonathan *is next in line for the throne*, and might perhaps have an interest in being against David.

ii. Jonathan's response is the same as in 1Sa. 20:2; he *didn't know* that Saul set out to get David in Naioth, though previously to that point, his father would tell him everything.

c. **Far be it from you!** Jonathan, with encouragement, tells David to put away his doubts about Jonathan's loyalty. Jonathan senses that David is in a vulnerable place, and he wants to give him encouragement in the midst of it.

d. **Who will tell me?** David now poses a practical problem. If Saul has determined evil against David, and Jonathan intends to warn him, how will he do it? How will Jonathan get the message to David?

B. Jonathan's agreement.

1. (12-13) Jonathan vows to find out the state of his father's heart for David.

Then Jonathan said to David: "The LORD God of Israel *is witness!* When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, *or the third day*, and indeed *there is* good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father *to do* you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety.

And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father.

a. **When I have sounded out my father:**

Jonathan will find out his father's heart, and will **report it to** David, if say if it is good or bad towards David.

b. **And send you away, that you may go in**

**safety:** Jonathan knows that if his father Saul intends evil against David, it means that David must go **away**. He would not be welcome again in the palace, and he would not be safe again at home. By giving David early warning of this, he would help David **go in safety**.

c. **And the LORD will be with you as He has been with my father:** Jonathan wants to give David more than a warning. He wants to give him *encouragement* also. "David, even if you must leave the palace and your home behind, and flee as a fugitive, **the LORD will be with you**. You can be sure of it."

i. We almost might think that Jonathan is being sarcastic when he says, "**as He has been with my father**," because one might think that the LORD was really *against* Saul instead of *for* him. But Jonathan had enough wisdom in the LORD to know that the LORD was really *for* Saul, because the LORD was trying to lead Saul to repentance.

ii. In the spiritual relationship between David and Jonathan, sometimes David was stronger spiritually, and sometimes Jonathan was stronger. But there was a bond in the LORD between these men that could not be broken.

2. (14-17) In response, Jonathan makes David commit himself in a covenant.

"And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut

off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, "Let the LORD require *it* at the hand of David's enemies." Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

a. **You shall not cut off your kindness for my house forever:** Jonathan was aware of the political dynamic between the family of David and the family of Jonathan. In that day, when one royal house replaced another, it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the old royal house.

Jonathan knew that one day, David and his descendants would rule over Israel, and he wants David to promise that David and his descendants will not kill or mistreat the descendants of Jonathan.

b. **So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David:** Jonathan and David agreed to care for one another. Jonathan agreed to care for David in the face of Saul's threat, and David agreed to care for Jonathan and his family in the future. David fulfilled this promise to Jonathan (2Sa. 9:1-8 and 21:7).

3. (18-23) Jonathan proposes a signal to inform David of Saul's reaction.

Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow *is* the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. And *when* you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target; and there I will send a lad, *saying*, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I expressly say to him, 'Look, the arrows *are* on this side of you; get them and come'; then, as the LORD lives, *there is* safety for you and no harm. But if I say thus to the young man, 'Look, the arrows *are* beyond you'; go your way, for the LORD has sent you away. And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the LORD *be* between you and me forever."

a. **I will shoot three arrows:** After Jonathan learns his father's heart and intention towards David, he will communicate to David through a signal. Jonathan will go out

to take target practice, and where he shoots the arrows will tell David the answer.

b. The arrows will bring one of two messages.

Either Saul's heart has changed towards David, and **there is safety for you and no harm**, or Saul is still determined to kill David, and **the LORD has sent you away**.

i. This was a crucial time in David's life.

Either he would be welcomed back to the palace and his home, or he would be a fugitive until Saul gave up the hunt for David. A lot was riding on the message brought through a few arrows!

C. Saul's settled hatred towards David.

1. (24-34) Saul is enraged when he learns of David's absence.

Then David hid in the field. And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the

feast. Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "Something has happened to him; he *is* unclean, surely he *is* unclean."

And it happened the next day, the second *day* of the month, that David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?" So Jonathan answered Saul,

"David earnestly asked *permission* of me *to go* to Bethlehem. And he said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me *to be there*. And now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my brothers.' Therefore he has not come to the king's table." Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious *woman*! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on

the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be killed? What has he done?" Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David.

So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.

a. **But David's place was empty:** David was expected to be at this special feast of the **New Moon**, and so he was conspicuous by his absence. At first, this did not trouble Saul greatly, because **he thought, "Something has happened to him; he is unclean, surely he is unclean."** Ceremonial uncleanness might cause a person to miss a feast such as this, but the ceremonial uncleanness would

only last a day (Lev. 22:3-7). So, when **it happened the next day . . . that David's place was empty**, Saul demanded an explanation.

i. Meyer on **the son of Jesse**: "Speaking of him derisively as 'the son of Jesse,' thus accentuating his lowly birth, and ignoring the relationship that bound him to the royal family."

b. **Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked permission of me to go to Bethlehem."** Jonathan is covering for David, trying to give Saul a plausible - and truthful - explanation for David's absence.

i. "It seems probably that he went first to Bethlehem, as he bade Jonathan to tell his father, ver. 6, and thence returned to the field, when the occasion required; else we must charge him with a downright lie, which

ought not to be imagined (without any apparent cause) concerning so good a man."  
(Poole <biblio.htm>)

c. **Saul's anger was aroused . . . "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!"** Jonathan knew from this response that Saul's heart was settled on evil against David. If Saul's heart was different towards David, he might have been disappointed that he wasn't there, but he wouldn't have been furious.

i. Poole on **to the shame of your mother's nakedness**: "Men will conclude, that thy mother was a whore, and thou a bastard; and that thou hast no royal blood in thy veins, that canst so tamely give up thy crown to so contemptible a person."

d. In his anger, Saul accused Jonathan of siding with David (**you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame**). He tried to encourage Jonathan's sense of hurt and self-interest against David (**as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom**). He tried to enlist Jonathan's help in killing David (**bring him to me, for he shall surely die**).

i. These were "Taunts that were intended to instil into Jonathan's heart the poison which was working in his own."  
(Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

ii. "Thus he grossly mistakes the cause of Jonathan's loss of the kingdom, which was not David's art, but Saul's sin; and vainly endeavours to prevent God's irrevocable sentence." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

e. **He shall surely die**: Certainly, this was Saul's intention, despite his previous oath ( *As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed*, 1Sa.

19:6). Apparently, Saul believed oaths were for other people, but not for him! Saul lived by what Trapp called "That Machiavellian maxim . .

. It is for tradesmen, and not for kings to keep their oaths." Yet, despite Saul's intentions, David would not die at the hands of Saul or any other enemy. Man proposes, but God disposes.

f. Jonathan responds by defending not only David, but *right* in this cause: **Why should he be killed? What has he done?** Jonathan's support of David wasn't a *blind* support; it was a support based on what was *right* before the LORD. Jonathan's support of David enraged Saul, and **Saul cast a spear at him to kill him**. This shows how deep Saul's hatred of David is; he will kill his own son for siding with David.

i. "Jonathan made one vain attempt to reason with the furious monarch; he might as well have tried to arrest the swelling of Jordan in the time of flood." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

ii. Jonathan saw this at once; he **knew that it was determined by his father to kill David**. This made Jonathan very angry, and he refused to continue participating in the feast.

2. (35-40) Jonathan tells David bout Saul's state of mind through the pre-arranged signal of the arrows.

And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad *was* with him. Then he said to his lad, "Now run, find the arrows which I shoot." As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. When the lad had come to the place where the arrow was which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried out after the lad and said, " *Is* not the arrow beyond you?" And Jonathan cried out after the lad, "Make haste, hurry, do not delay!"

So Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows and came back to his master. But the lad did not know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew of the matter. Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, "Go, carry *them* to the city."

a. **Is not the arrow beyond you?** In 1Sa.

20:21-22, Jonathan and David determined that if the arrows were shot at a shorter distance, then David could know that Saul's heart was favorable to him. If the arrows were shot further beyond, David could know that Saul's heart was still hard and he determined to destroy David.

i. It took courage for Jonathan to communicate with David, even secretly - because he knew that if his father became aware of it, he would focus his murderous rage against Jonathan *again*. There was something noble in Jonathan's commitment to David as a friend.

ii. "But there is something still nobler - when one dares in any company to avow his loyalty to the Lord Jesus. Like David, he is now in obscurity and disrepute; his name is not popular; his gospel is misrepresented; his followers are subjected to rebuke and scorn. These are days when to stand up for anything more than mere conventional religion must cost something; and for this reason let us never flinch." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

b. A small thing - the signal of a single arrow - told David his whole life was changed. He would no longer be welcome at the palace. He would no longer be welcome among the army of Israel. He would no longer be able to go home.



David now knew he would have to live as a fugitive, on the run from an angry, jealous king determined to destroy him.

i. Sometimes our lives can turn on a small thing. One night of carelessness may change a girl's life forever. One night with the wrong crowd may give a boy an arrest record. It

often times does not seem fair that so much in life should turn on small moments, but a lifetime is made of nothing but many small moments!

ii. "You have hoped against hope; you have tried to keep your position; you have done your duty, pleaded your cause, sought the intercession of your friends, prayed, wept, agonized. But it is all in vain; the arrows' flight proves you must go wither you may." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

3. (41-42) The tearful farewell of David and Jonathan.

As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, 'May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.'" So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

a. **They wept together:** David and Jonathan loved each other, and had a strong bond of friendship. But David couldn't stay, and

Jonathan couldn't go. They remembered their bond of friendship back in 1Sa. 18:1-4, when Jonathan gave David his armor and princely

robe. It was Jonathan's way of saying, "David, I recognize that you are God's choice to be the next king, not me. I'll lay aside my right to the throne, and help you take it. This armor of a prince, and the robe of a prince, belongs to you now, not me." Jonathan and David probably envisioned working *together*, as partners, as friends, both before and after the time David became king. But now all that was gone, so they **wept together**.

b. **But David more so**: If Jonathan had reason to weep, David had **more so**. The pain of being apart was bad enough, but it was worse for David because he was cut off from everything, and destined to live for many years the life of a fugitive.

i. "Behind you is the sunny morning, before you a lowering sky; behind you the blessed

enjoyment of friendship, wife, home, royal

favor, and popular adulation, before you an

outcast's life." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>) c. **Go in peace, since we have both sworn**

**in the name of the LORD**: Jonathan knew he might never see David again. In fact, David and Jonathan will only meet once more, shortly before Jonathan's death. But David now left for a life of hiding, secrecy, and danger. But

Jonathan could send David away **in peace**, because they have both have agreed to honor each other not only in life, but to honor each other's families beyond their own lifetimes.

i. Jonathan might have been threatened by

David, but instead he loved him and was loyal to him.

Jonathan, with his excellent character before God, served an important role in David's life. David might have started to think that Saul was rejected simply because he was wicked, and David was chosen simply because he was

godly. But if God just wanted a godly man to be king, why not Jonathan? God's choice of David was a reminder that

God has His own reasons for choosing, reasons we can't always figure out.

d. **So he arose and departed:** David will not return to "normal life" until Saul is dead and David is king. This is a pretty bleak road for David to walk, but it is *God's* road for him.

i. Was David in God's will? How can anyone set out on such a bleak road and be in the will of God? Because God often has His people spend at least some time on a bleak road, and He appoints some of His favorites to spend a lot of time on that road - think of Job, Joseph, Paul, and even Jesus.

ii. This bleak road is important in David's life, because if God will put David in a place where people must depend on him, God will teach David to depend upon God alone. Not himself, not Saul, not Jonathan, not anyone except God

iii. This bleak road is important in David's life, because if David will be safe now and promoted to king later, David must learn to let God be his defense and his promoter.

iv. This bleak road is important in David's life, because if David is to be set in such a great position of authority, David must learn to submit to God's authority, even if it is in a man like Saul. David *could* have decided to challenge Saul's authority, thinking "I'll stay around here and gather loyal people away from Saul and to myself. I'll start a campaign to bring me to the throne." But David wouldn't; he would submit to Saul's authority, trust the Lord, and just leave."

v. "Let God empty you out that He may save you from becoming spiritually stale, and lead you ever onward. He is always calling us to pass beyond the thing we know into the

unknown. A throne is God's purpose for you;  
a cross is God's path for you; faith is God's plan for you."  
(Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

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without permission **2** Jonathan said to him, "By no means  
are you going to die! My father does nothing large or small  
without making me aware of it. Why would my father hide  
this matter from me? It just won't happen!"

**3** Taking an oath, David again said, "Your father is very  
much aware of the fact that I have found favor with you, and  
he has thought, 'Don't let Jonathan know about this, or he  
will be upset.' But as surely as the LORD lives and you live,  
there is about one step between me and death!"

**4** Jonathan replied to David, "Tell me what I can do for you."

**5** David said to Jonathan, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and I  
am certainly expected to join the king for a meal. You must  
send me away so I can hide in the field until the third  
evening from now. **6** If your father happens to miss me, you  
should say, 'David urgently requested me to let him go to  
his city Bethlehem, for there is an annual sacrifice there for  
his entire family.' **7** If he should then say, 'That's fine,' then  
your servant is safe. But if he becomes very angry, be  
assured that he has decided to harm me. **8** You must be  
loyal to your servant, for you have made a covenant with  
your servant in the LORD's name. If I am guilty, you yourself  
kill me! Why bother taking me to your father?"

**9** Jonathan said, "Far be it from you to suggest this! If I were  
at all aware that my father had decided to harm you,  
wouldn't I tell you about it?" **10** David said to Jonathan,  
"Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" **11**

Jonathan said to David, "Come on. Let's go out to the field."

When the two of them had gone out into the field, **12**

Jonathan said to David, "The LORD God of Israel is my  
witness. I will feel out my father about this time the day after  
tomorrow. If he is favorably inclined toward David, will I not  
then send word to you and let you know? **13** But if my father

intends to do you harm, may the LORD do all this and more to Jonathan, if I don't let you know and send word to you so you can go safely on your way. May the LORD be with you, as he was with my father. **14** While I am still alive, extend to me the loyalty of the LORD, or else I will die! **15** Don't ever cut off your loyalty to my family, not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth **16** and called David's enemies to account." So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. **17** Jonathan once again took an oath with David, because he loved him. In fact Jonathan loved him as much as he did his own life. **18**

Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed, for your seat will be empty. **19** On the third day you should go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself the day this all started. Stay near the stone Ezel. **20** I will shoot three arrows near it, as though I were shooting at a target. **21** When I send a boy after them, I will say, "Go and find the arrows." If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them,' then come back. For as surely as the LORD lives, you will be safe and there will no problem. **22** But if I say to the boy, "Look, the arrows are on the other side of you,' get away. For in that case the LORD has sent you away.

**23** With regard to the matter that you and I discussed, the LORD is the witness between us forever!"

**24** So David hid in the field. When the new moon came, the king sat down to eat his meal. **25** The king sat down in his usual place by the wall, with Jonathan opposite him and Abner at his side. But David's place was vacant. **26**

However, Saul said nothing about it that day, for he thought, "Something has happened to make him ceremonially unclean. Yes, he must be unclean." **27** But the next morning, the second day of the new moon, David's place was still vacant. So Saul said to his son Jonathan,

“Why has Jesse’s son not come to the meal yesterday or today?”

**28** Jonathan replied to Saul, “David urgently requested that he be allowed to go to Bethlehem. **29** He said, ‘Permit me to go, for we are having a family sacrifice in the city, and my brother urged me to be there. So now, if I have found favor with you, let me go to see my brothers.’ For that reason he has not come to the king’s table.”

**30** Saul became angry with Jonathan and said to him, “You stupid traitor! Don’t I realize that to your own disgrace and to the disgrace of your mother’s nakedness you have chosen this son of Jesse? **31** For as long as this son of Jesse is alive on the earth, you and your kingdom will not be established. Now, send some men and bring him to me. For he is as good as dead!”

**32** Jonathan responded to his father Saul, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” **33** Then Saul threw his spear at Jonathan in order to strike him down.

So Jonathan was convinced that his father had decided to kill David. **34** Jonathan got up from the table enraged. He did not eat any food on that second day of the new moon, for he was upset that his father had humiliated David.

**35** The next morning Jonathan, along with a young servant, went out to the field to meet David. **36** He said to his servant, “Run, find the arrows that I am about to shoot.” As the servant ran, Jonathan shot the arrow beyond him. **37** When the servant came to the place where Jonathan had shot the arrow, Jonathan called out to the servant, “Isn’t the arrow further beyond you?” **38**

Jonathan called out to the servant, “Hurry! Go faster!

Don’t delay!” Jonathan’s servant retrieved the arrow and came back to his master. **39** (Now the servant did not understand any of this. Only Jonathan and David knew what was going on.) **40** Then Jonathan gave his equipment to the servant who was with him. He said to him, “Go, take these things back to the city.”

**41** When the servant had left, David got up from beside the mound, knelt with his face to the ground, and bowed three times. Then they kissed each other and they both wept, especially David. **42** Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for the two of us have sworn together in the name of the LORD saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" (21:1)

Then David got up and left, while Jonathan went back to the city.

**1** (21:2) David went to Ahimelech the priest in Nob. Ahimelech was shaking with fear when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you by yourself with no one accompanying you?"

Guzik - 1 Samuel 21:1-15

### ***1 Samuel 21 - David at Nob and at Gath***

A. David meets Ahimelech the priest at Nob.

1. (1-2) David, fleeing from Saul, comes to the city of Nob.

Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest.

And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, "Why *are* you alone, and no one is with you?" So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.' And I have directed *my* young men to such and such a place."

a. **Now David came to Nob:** "There were two places of this name, one on this side, the second on the other side of Jordan; but it is generally supposed that Nob, near Gibeah of Benjamin, is the place here intended; it was about twelve miles from Jerusalem." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

b. **To Ahimelech the priest:** Ahimelech was a priest, and he was where a priest should be - at the house of God, the tabernacle of the LORD, where the sacred altar and Ark of the Covenant were. David, in leaving on a bleak road where

all what is certain is behind him, and all what is uncertain is ahead of him, does a great thing: he goes to the house of the LORD.

i. David didn't write Psalm 73 (it is a Psalm of Asaph), but he had the same heart Psalm

73 shows. In that Psalm, Asaph describes how troubled he was at injustice and the prosperity of the wicked. It really troubled him, and didn't make any sense at all. He says, *When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.* (Psa. 73:16-17). Nothing made sense to Asaph until he went to the house of the LORD, then he could understand things in light of eternity. That is how it should always be for us when we come to God's house.

ii. So, David begins his days as a fugitive in a good way - he comes to the house of the LORD.

**c. Ahimelech was afraid when he met**

**David:** It seemed unusual to Ahimelech that a prominent man like David would wander around the villages of Judea all by himself. It made Ahimelech think something must be wrong, so

he asked David, **Why are you alone, and no one is with you?**

i. As the story unfolds, it seems that Ahimelech knew nothing of the conflict between David and Saul. In fact, he knew that David was Saul's son-in-law. It seemed strange, and dangerous to him, that David was traveling alone. Plus, we can imagine that David looked tired, weary, disheveled, and probably looked like he had been crying a lot!



ii. "David, who was before beloved, admired, and revered of all, is now left and

forsaken of all." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>) d. **The king has ordered me on some**

**business:** This was a plain lie. David has come to the house of the LORD, but when he came he lied to protect himself. David elaborated on his lie when he puts false words in the mouth of Saul to establish an environment of secrecy (**Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you**), and when he refers to **my young men** (David was all alone).

i. David's *reasons* for lying seem clear enough. First, he wants to protect himself, so he will not tell Ahimelech why he has

come or where he is going, so Ahimelech can't inform on him to Saul. Probably, David doesn't feel that he knows Ahimelech well enough to really trust him. Second, he wants to protect Ahimelech and the priests by keeping them out of the conflict between himself and Saul.

ii. In many ways, we can understand why David lied, and even sympathize with him. Many of us would have done the same or worse in the same situation. At the same time, David would come to horribly regret this lie (as he says in 1Sa. 22:22).

iii. Why couldn't David just tell the truth?

Why couldn't he come to Ahimelech the priest, and say "Ahimelech, as strange as it might seem to you, Saul is trying to kill me.

I don't understand the situation myself, but I know God does not want me to die at the

hands of Saul. So I am running for my life, and trusting God will protect me and show me what to do. Please pray for me, because

I'm pretty depressed and scared!" This might have been hard for David to say; but his lie became harder still.

iv. "Some go about to excuse David's lying here: but that cannot be. The consequences of it were very sad . . . and afterward made his soul melt for very heaviness, whilst he bewailed it, and begged pardoning and prevailing grace (Psa. 119:28-29)." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

v. "It is not easy to walk with God. The air that beats around the Himalaya heights of divine fellowship is rare and hard to breathe; human feet tire after a little; and faith, hard put to it, is inclined to give up the effort of keeping step with the divine pace." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

2. (3-6) David asks for and receives holy bread.

"Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves* of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found." And the priest answered David and said, " *There is* no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly, women *have been* kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in effect common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day." So the priest gave him holy *bread*; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread *in its place* on the day when it was taken away.

a. **Give me five loaves of bread:** David was on the run from Saul, and didn't have time to properly prepare. When he came to the tabernacle in Nob, he was hungry, and knew he needed food both now and later.

b. **There is no common bread on hand; but**

**there is holy bread:** The tabernacle of the LORD had a table which held twelve loaves of bread, symbolizing God's continual fellowship with Israel.

i. As one entered the tabernacle, the table of showbread stood on the right hand side, opposite the golden lampstand. The table of showbread was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold; it was 3 feet long, 1 foot 6 inches wide, and 2 feet 3 inches high. It was made almost 500 years before David's time, when Israel came from Egypt and was on their way into the Promised Land (Exo. 25:23-30).

ii. On this table were twelve loaves of *showbread*, made of fine flour. Twelve cakes of showbread - one for each tribe of Israel - would stand on the table, sprinkled lightly with frankincense. Once a week, the bread would be replaced, and priests were to eat the old bread (Lev. 24:5-9).

iii. What did the showbread *mean*? Why would God have a bakery rack in the tabernacle? The importance and meaning of the showbread is found in the name. Literally, *showbread* means "bread of faces." It is bread associated with, and to be eaten before, *the face of God*. F.B. Meyer calls the *showbread* "presence-bread." To eat the showbread was to eat God's bread in God's house as a friend and a guest of the LORD, enjoying His hospitality. In that culture, eating together formed a bond of friendship that was permanent and sacred. Eating the showbread was a powerful way of saying, "LORD I love You and I seek Your face. I'm in Your presence and I want to be transformed by seeing Your face."

iv. The showbread was always to be *fresh*. Ahimelech would give David the old showbread, **which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place**. God wants our fellowship with Him, our time before His face, to be *fresh*. Your time with God should be freshness dated! Don't be satisfied with a stale, moldy relationship with the LORD!

v. We might also see the showbread as a demonstration of our dependence on God, just as we depend on food. It was also a powerful way to say that just as bread is necessary for survival, so fellowship with God is necessary for man. It acted out the words of the Lord's prayer, *Give us day by day our daily bread* (Luk. 11:3).

c. **If the young men have at least kept themselves from women:** The showbread was not to be treated casually. In fact, it was to be eaten by the priests: *And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute* (Lev. 24:9). While this passage in Leviticus does not specifically say that *only* priests can eat the showbread, it establishes the principle that it is holy, and it must be regarded as holy, and can't be distributed casually. So, Ahimelech asks David for a basic level of ceremonial cleanness before he gives him the showbread.

i. Ahimelech was only concerned that those eating the bread be ceremonially clean according to the standards of Leviticus 15. Among other things, that chapter speaks of ceremonial cleanness as it relates to marital relations.

d. **Truly, women have been kept from us:** David, still acting as if he is traveling with a group, thinks "Sure, I

haven't had marital relations in several days, so I meet the standard for ceremonial purity in this case." So, he gives Ahimelech this answer.

**e. So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the**

**showbread:** In giving David the bread, Ahimelech broke with priestly custom, but not with God's word. He rightly understood that human need was more important than Levitical observance.

i. Once, when Jesus' disciples were criticized for breaking religious custom by eating against traditions, Jesus used what Ahimelech did to explain the matter (Mat. 12:1-8). Jesus approved of what Ahimelech did, and Jesus honored him by standing on Ahimelech's same ground!

ii. The point with Ahimelech and Jesus is powerful: human traditions are never more important than God's word itself. If God had said, " *Only* the priests can eat this bread," it would have been different. But God never said that. To put the *only* in there seemed logical, but it was adding to God's word. We must never elevate our *extension* or *application* of God's word to the same level as God's word itself.

iii. "For though for a season, whilst it is to stand before the Lord, it be so holy, that the priest himself might not eat it; yet afterwards it is eaten by the priest, and by his whole family, as their common food; and so it may be by us, in our

circumstances." (Poole <biblio.htm>) 3. (7-9) David receives a sword, and is spotted by one of Saul's royal officials.

Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the LORD. And his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who *belonged* to Saul.

And David said to Ahimelech, "Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." So the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take *it*."

For *there is* no other except that one here." And David said, "*There is* none like it; give it to me."

a. **Doeg the Edomite**: We meet a character we will meet again. Doeg was **chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul**, and he

was not an Israelite, he was an **Edomite**.

i. **Chief of the herdsmen**: The word translated **chief** means *mighty*, but can also be used to mean *violent* or *obstinate*. Doeg will certainly show himself to be a violent and obstinate man.

ii. Why was Doeg **detained before the LORD**? By what we see of this man and his character, it is hard to think that he was doing real "spiritual business" before the LORD at the tabernacle. Probably, he was fulfilling some ceremonial requirement related to his employment for the king of Israel.

iii. "Doeg may set his foot as far within the tabernacle as David, and seem to be as devout: 'but God knoweth your hearts,' saith our Saviour to the Pharisees (Luk. 16:15), and will wash off your paint with rivers of brimstone." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

b. **Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword?** We can understand why David wants a weapon, and why he asks. But it is also sad that David continues his same lie about being on **the king's business**. David is desperately trying to avoid **the king's business**, because right now, the king's business is killing David!

i. Considering what **the king's business**

really was, David told the truth when he

said, "**The king's business required**

**haste.**" That was true, but not in the way David meant it!

ii. "It is painful to the last degree to see one whose faith towered to such a lofty height in the encounter with Goliath, coming down from that noble elevation, to find him resorting for self-protection to the lies and artifices of an impostor." (Balikie <biblio.

htm>)

c. **The sword of Goliath:** As David took the sword of Goliath, imagine what he must have thought! Of course, he was happy to have a

good weapon (**There is none like it**). On the other hand, did he remember how he came to win that sword for Israel? He didn't do it with lies and half-truths. He did it with a bold trust in God, a trust that believed God and trusted *Him* to sort out the consequences.

i. The last time David held that sword in his hand, he used it to cut the head off the

giant he had killed with great faith in God

(1Sa. 17:51). But the sword was not the

weapon of faith; the sling and the stones

were. David now remembers the victory, but

perhaps not the faith that brought the victory.

ii. David can have the sword of Goliath in his arsenal, but he would be even better

equipped if he had the same sling, five

smooth stones, and faith that killed Goliath.

Is David now trusting in Philistine swords

more than the shepherd tools? There was

nothing wrong with Goliath's sword - the

LORD used it before (1Sa. 17:51), but only

in the context of radical *faith*. The press of the trial with Saul is challenging these things in David's life, and it remains to

be seen how it will all turn out. He is starting to trust more in his own cleverness than in the LORD, but will he stay there?

iii. "David lost confidence in God and in fulfillment of God's purpose for his life which had been revealed to him. He went to God's house for comfort and help and guidance, but he was detected as being wrong in his soul. Instead of acknowledging the truth to the only one who could help him and confessing that he had been telling a lie, he ran for his life again." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

d. **There is none like it; give it to me:** Knowing that something is *precious* and *wonderful*, it makes us want it. Being in a time of *trial* or *stress* makes us want the wonderful thing all the more. If this was true of Goliath's sword, how much more true is it of the sword of the Spirit, God's Word! How we should say, **give it to me!**

i. "There are some who are bent on taking away the Word of God. Well, if *they* discard it, 'Give it to *me*.' There are some who want to put it up on the self, as a thing that has seen its best days. *They* suppose the old sword is rusty, and worn out, but *we* can say, 'There is none like that; give it to me!'" (Spurgeon)

ii. Trapp on **there is none like it:** "Say we so of the sword of the Spirit, the word, when preached especially. As milk warmed is fitter for nourishment, and as the rain from heaven hath a fatness with it, and a special influence more than standing waters: so there is not that life, operation, and blessing in the word read as preached."

B. David at Gath.

1. (10) David flees to Gath.

Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

a. **David arose and fled that day:** When David said goodbye to Jonathan, he did the



right thing. First, he went to the house of the LORD. But when he was there, he did the wrong thing - he lied to Ahimelech the priest, and tried to protect himself with clever lies instead of trusting God to protect him.

b. **Went to Achish the king of Gath:** David is now among the Philistines. He must be

discouraged or deceived to think he could find peaceful refuge among these enemies of Israel.

In fact, as he walks into the city, he has with him the sword of Goliath, which he received from Ahimelech at Nob!

i. It didn't make sense for the man who carried Goliath's sword to go to Goliath's hometown (1Sa. 17:4)! It didn't make sense for the man who was sustained by the sacred bread of God to find refuge among the pagans! It didn't make sense for the man after God's own heart to change his address to Gath!

2. (11-12) David's predicament in Gath.

And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?'" Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

a. **Is this not David the king of the land?**

The Philistines of Gath recognize David as **the king of the land** of Israel. The ungodly understood David's destiny better than king Saul of Israel did!

b. **Did they not sing of him to one another in dances:**

The song and dance about David that swept the nation of Israel (1Sa. 18:6-7) apparently also made the charts among the Philistines. If he didn't know it before, now David found that there was real price for fame.

c. **David took these words to heart, and**

**was very much afraid:** David knew that he had been discovered, and that King Achish was not likely to let the man who killed Goliath go.

i. When we remember that the song was a celebration of David's victory over Goliath, and remember that Goliath was from Gath (1Sa. 17:4), and remember that David has Goliath's sword with him, we see just how much reason David had to be **very much afraid**.

ii. What possibly can David do now? He can remember the other thing he brought with him from the house of the LORD in Nob: the bread from the tabernacle, which pictured a life shared with God and sustained by God.

d. David's words in Psalm 56 help us understand what happened here. The title of that Psalm identifies as the song he wrote *when the Philistines captured him in Gath*. Apparently, although 1 Samuel 21 doesn't detail it, the Philistines *captured* David when he came to Gath. David thought he could find anonymity or sympathy among the ungodly Philistines in Gath, but he was wrong! So, at the end of 1Sa.

21:10, when David wrote Psalm 56, he was in a bad place.

i. Psalm 56 begins the right way: *Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up* (Psa. 56:1). In other Psalms, David asks God to take up his righteous cause against his opponents. Here, David knows that his own sinful fears and choices brought him to this place, so he simply and wisely asks for mercy.

ii. In Psalm 56, David shows a different heart. Instead of trusting in his own cleverness or refuge among the ungodly, he says *whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear*.

*What can flesh do to me?* (Psa. 56:3) iii. In Psalm 56, David renews his relationship and confidence in God. *You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me* (Psa. 56:8-9). When David trusted in himself or in the ungodly, he had forgotten that God was really *for* him. Now he remembers it!

iv. In Psalm 56, David gets back in touch with God's word. Three times in the Psalm, he repeats the phrase *I will praise His word* (Psa. 56:4, 10). When David trusted in himself or in the ungodly, he had distanced himself from God's truth. Now, he *will praise His word!* In 1998, a Marine Corps pilot flying low in the Italian Alps clipped a gondola cable, and 20 people plunged to their death. Just a few weeks later, a crew of five Navy fliers was killed in California's Sequoia National Forest when their helicopter smashed into power lines. Three years earlier, a crash involving the same power lines had killed two people. In 1999, NATO forces bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists and injuring 20 others. Each of these tragedies had the same cause: *faulty maps*. Investigators say that the National Imagery and Mapping Agency and its predecessor organization have played a role in at least a dozen accidents since 1985, some involving fatalities and loss of military aircraft. If you don't have the right map, you will get into trouble. God's Word is the map for our lives.

So, when David says *I will praise His word*, he is back in touch with the essential road map for his life.

v. In Psalm 56, David starts praising the LORD again. *Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You, for You have delivered my soul from death.* (Psa. 56:12-13a). When David trusted in himself or in the ungodly, he didn't have much to praise the LORD about. Now he does!

e. The slide that started on the road from Jonathan and continued on into Gath is now stopped. David is on higher ground again! This was the difference between David and Saul; both of them slipped. But Saul kept sliding, while David turned back to the LORD.

f. Psalm 56 makes it clear that David's heart is changed. 1Sa. 21:12 says David **was very much afraid**, but he came to the place of trust and confidence that he declares in Psalm 56. He isn't afraid anymore, but he is still in a mess! He is still a captive of the Philistines, and therefore in a bad place. How will God get him out of the situation?

3. (13-15) To escape, David pretends madness.

So he changed his behavior before them, feigned madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this *fellow* to play the madman in my presence? Shall this *fellow* come into my house?"

a. David **pretended madness in their hands**.

He acted in a strange manner, including scratching on the doors of the gate, and **let saliva fall down on his beard**. It was as if David was foaming at the mouth.

i. Basically, David humiliated himself before the Philistines and acted like a madman.

The **saliva** on the **beard** was especially convincing, because men in that culture would have considered that something only

a man out of his right mind would allow. "An indignity to the beard was considered an

intolerable insult and would not have been

permitted by a normal person." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

b. **This man is insane. Why have you**

**brought him to me?** David's plan worked.

Achish decided that either David wasn't the man he thought he was, or that if he was, he was

such a pathetic specimen that he may as well let him go.

i. Was David walking in the Spirit or in the flesh when he pretended madness? Some commentators believe that David was in the flesh and trusting in himself. But the turn around of Psalm 56 happened before David's escape, and it makes sense that the LORD would guide David into a path of escape that would *humble* him. When David tried to protect himself with lies, and when he tried to find refuge among the ungodly, he really

was acting *crazy*. When David repented, asked for mercy, and trusted again in the LORD, it was as if the LORD said "You've been acting like a madman, David. So keep the act going and I'll get you out of this!"

ii. Of course, David may not have even been conscious of the LORD's guidance in his plan to pretend madness. But the LORD was guiding this righteous man just the same.

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.* (Psa. 37:23) c. Psalm 34 is David's declaration of joy when he escaped from Gath with his life. The title of Psalm 34 reads, *A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who*

*drove him away, and he departed.*

i. Psalm 34 begins beautifully: *I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears* (Psa. 34:1-4). The whole Psalm is a glorious

declaration of praise! David was amazed with gratitude to the LORD.

ii. David is especially joyful because the

LORD got him out of a mess that David himself made. God's amazing goodness is shown when He delivers us when we don't really deserve it. *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom. 5:8) © 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** David replied to Ahimelech the priest, "The king instructed me to do something, but he said to me, 'Don't let anyone know the reason I am sending you or the instructions I have given you.' I have told my soldiers to wait at a certain place. **3** Now what do you have at your disposal? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found."

**4** The priest replied to David, "I don't have any ordinary bread at my disposal. Only holy bread is available, and then only if your soldiers have abstained from sexual relations with women." **5** David said to the priest, "Certainly women have been kept away from us, just as on previous occasions when I have set out. The soldiers' equipment is holy, even on an ordinary journey. How much more so will they be holy today, along with their equipment!"

**6** So the priest gave him holy bread, for there was no bread there other than the bread of the Presence. It had been removed from before the LORD in order to replace it with hot bread on the day it had been taken away. **7** (One of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's shepherds.) **8** David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no sword or spear here at your disposal? I don't have my own sword or equipment in hand due to the urgency of the king's instructions."

**9** The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Elah, is wrapped in a garment behind the ephod. If you wish, take it for yourself. Other than that, there's nothing here." David said, "There's

nothing like it! Give it to me!" **10** So on that day David arose and fled from Saul. He went to King Achish of Gath. **11** The servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one that they sing about when they dance, saying, 'Saul struck down his thousands, But David his tens of thousands'?"

**12** David thought about what they said and was very afraid of King Achish of Gath. **13** He altered his behavior in their presence. Since he was in their power, he pretended to be insane, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting his saliva run down his beard.

**14** Achish said to his servants, "Look at this madman! Why did you bring him to me? **15** Do I have a shortage of fools, that you have brought me this man to display his insanity in front of me? Should this man enter my house?"

**1** So David left there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and the rest of his father's family learned about it, they went down there to him.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 22:1-23

### ***1 Samuel 22 - David at Adullam Cave, Saul Murders the Priests***

A. David at Adullam cave.

1. (1a) David's distress at Adullam.

David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

a. **David therefore departed from there:** David has been through a lot. He had the high of immediate fame, a recent marriage, dangers from the Philistines, repeated attempts on his life, and a heartbreaking farewell from everyday life to live as a fugitive for who knows how long.

Then, David had a brief but intense period of backsliding, a dramatic turn to the LORD and deliverance from a life-threatening situation.

i. As David left Gath, he praised God with the exaltation we read in Psalm 34. David was pumped! But after that exhilaration



wore off, he had a serious problem to consider: *what do I do now?*

b. **Escaped to the cave of Adullam:** This was David's place of refuge. He couldn't go to his house, he couldn't go to the palace, he couldn't go to Samuel, he couldn't go to Jonathan, he couldn't go to the house of the LORD, and he couldn't go to the ungodly. But he could go to a humble **cave** and find refuge.

i. The name **Adullam** means *refuge*, but the cave wasn't to be David's refuge. The LORD wanted to be David's refuge in this time of discouragement.

ii. Most archaeologists believe that the Cave of Adullam was not too far from the place where David defeated Goliath, in the hills of Judah. David couldn't help but think, "Boy, I've come a long way from the Valley of Elah! From a great victory to running around like a criminal, hiding in a cave."

c. The title of Psalm 142 reads *A Contemplation of David. A prayer when he was in the cave.*

So, Psalm 142 describes David's discouraged heart: *I cry out to the LORD with my voice; with my voice to the LORD I make my supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul.* (Psa. 142:1-4) d. The title of Psalm 57 reads *A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.*

Psalm 57 describes David as the LORD strengthened him in the cave and prepared him for what was next.

i. Psalm 57 shows David with a humble heart: *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!* (Psa. 57:1) ii. Psalm 57 shows David with a prayerful

heart: *I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me.* (Psa. 57:2)

iii. Psalm 57 shows David with a realistic heart: *My soul is among lions . . . they have prepared a net for my steps.* (Psa. 57:4, 6) iv. Psalm 57 shows a heart of trusting praise to the LORD: *I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations . . . Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* (Psa. 57:9, 5, 11) e. The LORD brought David into this place while He was still in **Adullam cave**. Many times we think we have to get out of the cave until we can have the heart David had in Psalm 57. But we can have it now, no matter what our circumstances.

2. (1b-2) Others come to David at Adullam cave.

And when his brothers and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down there to him. And everyone *who was* in distress, everyone who *was* in debt, and everyone *who was* discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.

a. First, David's *family* came to him. **So when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.**

This is a precious gift from God, because previously all David had was trouble and persecution from his father and his brothers.

Now, they join him at Adullam cave.

i. In 1Sa. 16:11, David's father thought so little of him that he was not even invited to the family dinner with the prophet Samuel.

In 1Sa. 17:28, David's brother unjustly accused and criticized David. So David's family had seemed to mostly be against them, but now they are for him. What a blessing to David!

**b. And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him:**

What a group! God called an unlikely and unique group to David in Adullam cave. These were not the men that David would have chosen for himself, but they were the ones called to him.

i. These men were **in distress**. Their own lives weren't easy or together. They had problems of their own, yet God called them

to David at Adullam cave.

ii. These men were **in debt**. They hadn't seen a lot of success in the past, and smarted from their past failures.

They had

problems of their own, yet God called them to David at Adullam cave.

iii. These men were **discontented**. The Hebrew for **discontented** is *bitter of soul*.

They knew the bitterness of life, and they were not satisfied with their lives or with King Saul. They wanted something different, and something better, and God called them to David at Adullam cave.

iv. It was only those who were sick of the reign of Saul who came to David. Those who prospered under the wicked king were comfortable with him. These men had to make conscious choice: who will lead me? Will I be a man of Saul or a man of David? Who will be my king? These 400 men sensed that David was the rightful king, and that Saul was just a pretender to the throne.

v. These all came to David when he was down and out, hunted and despised. Once David came to the throne, there were a lot of people who wanted to be around him. But

the glory of these 400 is that they came to David in the cave.

vi. "Herein David became a type of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, who cried,

'Come unto me, all ye that are weary.'" (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

c. **So he became captain over them:** This was not a mob. This was a team that needed a leader, and David **became captain over**

**them.** God doesn't work through mobs. He works through called men and women, but He also calls others to stand with and support those men and women.

i. These men *came* to David in distress, in debt, and discontented, but they didn't *stay* that way. "It is very possible that these several disaffected and exceptionable characters might at first have supposed that David, unjustly persecuted, would be glad to avail himself of their assistance that he might revenge himself upon Saul, and so they in the mean time might profit by plunder, [and so forth]. But if this were their design they were greatly disappointed, for David never made any improper use of them." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

ii. David made them into the kind of men described in 1Ch. 12:8: *Mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle the shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains.*

d. **And there were about four hundred men**

**with him:** When David was down and discouraged in Adullam Cave, God brought people around him to strengthen him in the work. David was the one anointed by God to be the next king over Israel, and Israel's greatest earthly king; but just

as much as God called David, God called these four hundred to come beside David.

i. Each principle is important. The principle that *God leads through a called and anointed man* is important. When an ark had to be built, God didn't call 400 men. When Israel needed deliverance from Egypt, God didn't call a committee. Over and over again in the Scriptures, God's work is led by a called and anointed man.

ii. At the same time, the principle that *God rarely calls that man to work alone* is important. David *needed* these 400 men, even if he never thought he did before. They are just as called and anointed as David is, but they are called and anointed to follow and support David, and he is called and anointed to lead them.

iii. **Four hundred men**, and desperate men at that. This was a solid beginning to a rebel army, if David wanted it to be that. An unprincipled leader might make these 400 men into a gang of rebels or cutthroats, but David would never allow this to become a rebel army against King Saul.

e. David had his followers, and so does the Son of David, Jesus Christ.

i. "Do you see the truth of which this Old Testament story is so graphic a picture? Just as in David's day, there is a King in exile who is gathering around Him a company of people who are in distress, in debt, and discontented. He is training and preparing them for the day when He shall come to reign." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

ii. "These are the kind of men who came to David: distressed, bankrupt, dissatisfied.

These are the kind of people who come to Christ, and they are the only people who

come to Him, for they have recognized their distress, their debt, and bankruptcy, and are conscious that they are utterly discontented.

The sheer pressures of these frustrations drives them to the refuge of the blood of Christ that was shed for them." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

3. (3-4) David cares for his parents.

Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know what God will do for me." So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

a. **He said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come here with you."** David took his parents to Moab because his great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite (Rth.

4:18-22, 1:4). He wanted his parents to be safe in whatever battles he may face in the future.

i. This shows wonderful love and obedience

on the part of David. First, it shows a *wonderful love*. He cared for his parents when he had plenty of problems of his own.

We sometimes think that when we are going through trials, we have a license to be unloving and selfish, but David shows that we can and must care about others instead of becoming self-focused in times of trial.

Secondly, it shows a *wonderful obedience*.

Even though David did not have a problem-free home life, he knew he was still obligated to obey the fifth commandment:

*Honor your father and your mother* (Exo. 20:12).

b. **Till I know what God will do for me:** David doesn't know the whole story. He knew he was called and anointed

to be the next king of Israel. But he had no idea how God would

get him there. David had to trust and obey when he didn't **know what God will do for me**, and here he is doing it.

4. (5) David hears from the prophet Gad.

Now the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go to the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

a. **Now the prophet Gad said to David:**

David enjoyed support and aid from the prophets. Saul's dealing with the prophets (such as Samuel) was almost always negative, because Saul resisted the word of God. David received God's word.

b. **Go to the land of Judah:** Gad counsels David to leave his own **stronghold**, and to go back to the very stronghold of Saul. This probably wasn't what David really wanted to hear, but he obeyed anyway. David had to learn to trust God in the midst of the danger, not on the other side of the danger!

i. One reason why God wanted David in Judah was so that he could do some good.

David may have thought he would just wait out the years until Saul died, isolated in the wilderness. But God wants us to be active.

"God is a pure act, and he willeth that all his should be active, 'and run with patience the race that is set before them.'" (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

ii. "Hereby also God would exercise David's faith, and wisdom, and courage; and so prepare him for the kingdom, and uphold and increase his reputation among the people." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

B. Saul murders the priests.

1. (6-8) Feeling sorry for himself, Saul accuses his aides of treason.

When Saul heard that David and the men who *were* with him had been discovered; now Saul was staying in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him; then Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds?

All of you have conspired against me, and *there is* no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse; and *there is* not one of you who is sorry for me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as *it is* this day."

a. **David and the men who were with him**

**had been discovered:** When it was just David hiding out from Saul, he could remain hidden for a long time. But you can't hide 400 men.

When David came back into Judah, Saul's network of informants quickly discovered where he was.

b. **With a spear in his hand, and all his**

**servants standing about him:** We've seen Saul in this place before! When Saul has a spear in his hand, it usually means that he is going to try to hurt someone.

c. **Will the son of Jesse give everyone of**

**you fields and vineyards:** Saul appeals to the truly worst in these men, asking them if a man from Judah will favor the tribe of Benjamin with riches and promotions.

i. Also, notice how Saul refers to David: **the son of Jesse**. He didn't say, "The Man Who Killed Goliath," or "The Man Who Killed 200

Philistines," or "The Man Anointed by God."

Saul knew that David came from a family of simple farmers, so he calls him by the humblest name he can think of - **the son of Jesse**.



**d. All of you have conspired against me . . . there is not one of you who is sorry for me:**

In his fleshly, self-focused world, everything revolves around Saul. He becomes paranoid and whines, and he leads through guilt and accusation.

**e. My son has stirred up my servant**

**against me:** Jonathan never did any such thing, but Saul could not accept the truth that David and Jonathan were in the right, and he was in the wrong. So he constructs elaborate

conspiracies against him. This is a trap for any leader who feels under attack!

2. (9-10) Doeg reports on Ahimelech and David to King Saul. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, "I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

a. **Doeg the Edomite** was last seen in 1Sa.

21:7, where he was in Nob, at the tabernacle at the same time David came there. 1Sa. 21:7 says that Doeg was *detained before the LORD* there, but that doesn't necessarily mean that he was honoring or really worshipping the LORD. He probably was simply fulfilling a ceremonial obligation connected to his employment to the king of Israel.

b. Doeg implicates the priest Ahimelech as David's accomplice. **He inquired of the LORD**

**for him, gave him provisions, and gave**

**him the sword of Goliath.** "Look at all the help Ahimelech gave David! Surely, they are working together against you Saul, and

Ahimelech probably knows exactly where David is and where he is going!"

c. Doeg was more than an ambitious man looking for any opportunity to promote himself.

He also knew how to divert Saul's anger and suspicion from his own staff to the priests.

3. (11-15) Saul accuses Ahimelech of conspiracy with David. So the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who *were* in Nob. And they all came to the king. And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub!" And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." Then Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise

against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day?" So Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants *is as faithful as David*, who is the king's son-in-law, who goes at your bidding, and is honorable in your house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? Far be it from me! Let not the king impute anything to his servant, *or* to any in the house of my father. For your servant knew nothing of all this, little or much."

a. **Here I am, my lord:** Ahimelech answers Saul with the honesty of a man with a clear conscience. He simply and honestly says, " **Let not the king impute anything to his servant.**"

i. For his part, Saul continues in his reckless paranoia. Not only does he accuse

Ahimelech and David of conspiracy against him (**you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse**), but he also thinks that David is out to kill him (**that he should rise against me, to lie in wait**). Saul thinks of *himself* as the victim! In his mind, David and Ahimelech are *out to get him!*

b. **For your servant knew nothing of all this, little or much:** Ahimelech is telling the exact truth. When David came to Ahimelech, the priest questioned him carefully ( *Why are you alone, and no one is with you*, 1Sa. 21:1).

Instead of telling Ahimelech the truth, David lied to him. This put Ahimelech in a very vulnerable position.

i. Ahimelech is so unaware of the hatred Saul has for David that he praises David before the jealous king: **And who among all your servants is as faithful as David.**

This is because David told Ahimelech that he was on Saul's bidding when he was really running for his life (1Sa. 21:2).

4. (16-19) Saul commands the execution of the priests and their families, and Doeg the Edomite carries it out.

And the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house!" Then the king said to the guards who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me." But the servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the LORD. And the king said to Doeg, "You turn and kill the priests!" So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod. Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep; with the edge of the sword.

a. **"You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and your father's house!"** Any man in the place of sin and rebellion Saul is in can't stand to see an innocent, guileless man like Ahimelech not in agreement with him. So, he commands him to be *murdered*.

i. This command shows Saul is going faster and faster down the decline away from the LORD. He had tried to kill David many times before, and had even tried to kill his own son. But now he commands the death of complete bystanders to the problem. He commands the death of priests of the LORD.

And he commands the death of their families.

ii. Saul was reluctant to kill the enemies of the LORD when he was commanded to (1Sa.

15:9). But here he isn't reluctant to murder the priests of the LORD in cold blood. Saul is clearly going off the deep end. "His anger was bent against the Lord himself, for taking away his kingdom, and giving it to another: and because he could not come at the Lord, therefore he wreaketh his rage upon his priests." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

iii. "This is one of the worst acts in the life of Saul; his malice was implacable, and his wrath was cruel, and there is no motive of justice or policy by which such a barbarous act can be justified." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

"A bloody sentence, harshly pronounced and as rashly executed, without any pause or deliberation, without any remorse or regret. This was the worst act that ever Saul did." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

iv. "What a warning is here that we should not yield to the first intrusion of evil, lest the thought should lead to the act, and repeated acts to the habit, and habits congeal to character, and character become set in destiny!" (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

**b. The servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the LORD.** To their credit, Saul's servants feared God more than Saul, and refused to murder the priests.

**c. So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests:** Doeg, who was not a Jew, but an Edomite, didn't hesitate to murder the priests and their families. Apparently, when Doeg was *detained before the LORD* at the tabernacle (1Sa. 21:7), it didn't change his heart at all.

5. (20-23) David protects Abiathar, the only

survivor of Ahimelech's family.

Now one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the Lord's priests. So David said to Abiathar, "I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul.

I have caused *the death* of all the persons of your father's house. Stay with me; do not fear.

For he who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you *shall be safe*."

**a. I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely**

**tell Saul:** David showed how he felt about this in Psalm 52, which says in its title *A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."*

i. In Psalm 52, David shows his outrage against Doeg: *Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness.*

*You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue.* (Psa. 52:1a, 2-4)

ii. In Psalm 52, David shows his confidence in God's judgments: *God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living.*

(Psa. 52:5)

iii. In Psalm 52, David shows his focus on the LORD: *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is*

*good.* (Psa. 52:8-9) b. **I have caused the death of all the persons of your father's house:** David

meant this in two ways. In the greater way, it was David's mere presence with Ahimelech that made him guilty before Saul, and there really wasn't anything David or anyone could do about that. In the lesser way, David's lying to Ahimelech made the priest more vulnerable than ever before Saul.

i. David's lies did not directly kill Ahimelech and the other priests. But at the very least, he kept Ahimelech from dying with greater honor. If Ahimelech would have known of the conflict between David and Saul, he could have chosen to stand with David, and die with greater honor. Any way you slice it, David's lies came to no good.

ii. We know from both 1 Samuel and the Psalms that David turned his heart back to the LORD and asked forgiveness after his lies to Ahimelech. David was restored, but there was still bad fruit to come of the lies, and now David sees and tastes that bad fruit.

c. **With me you shall be safe:** David could not do anything about the priests who were already murdered. He confessed his guilt in the matter, and sought forgiveness from the LORD.

Now, all he can do is minister to the need in front of him - Abiathar, the surviving priest.

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** All those who were in trouble or owed someone money or were discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. He had about four hundred men with him.

**3** Then David went from there to Mizpah in Moab, where he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother stay with you until I know what God is going to do for me." **4**

So he had them stay with the king of Moab; they stayed with him the whole time that David was in the stronghold. **5** Then Gad the prophet said to David, "Don't stay in the stronghold. Go to the land of Judah." So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

**6** But Saul found out the whereabouts of David and the men who were with him. Now Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree at an elevated location with his spear in hand and all his servants stationed around him. **7**

Saul said to his servants who were stationed around him, "Listen up, you Benjaminites! Is Jesse's son giving fields and vineyards to all of you? Or is he making all of you commanders and officers? **8** For all of you have conspired against me! No one informs me when my own son makes an agreement with this son of Jesse! Not one of you feels sorry for me or informs me that my own son has commissioned my own servant to hide in ambush against me, as is the case today!"

**9** But Doeg the Edomite, who had stationed himself with the servants of Saul, replied, "I saw this son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob. **10** He inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions. He also gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

**11** Then the king arranged for a meeting with the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and all the priests of his father's house who were at Nob. They all came to the king. **12**

Then Saul said, "Listen, son of Ahitub." He replied, "Here I am, my lord." **13** Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and this son of Jesse? You gave him bread and a sword and inquired of God on his behalf, so that he opposes me and waits in ambush, as is the case today!"

**14** Ahimelech replied to the king, "Who among all your servants is faithful like David? He is the king's son-in-law, the leader of your bodyguard, and honored in your house!"

**15** Was it just today that I began to inquire of God on his behalf? Far be it from me! The king should not accuse his

servant or any of my father's house. For your servant is not aware of all this – not in whole or in part!"

**16** But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house! **17** Then the king said to the messengers who were stationed beside him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, for they too have sided with David! They knew he was fleeing, but they did not inform me." But the king's servants refused to harm the priests of the LORD.

**18** Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike down the priests!" So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests. He killed on that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. **19** As for Nob, the city of the priests, he struck down with the sword men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep – all with the sword.

**20** But one of the sons of Ahimelech son of Ahitub escaped and fled to David. His name was Abiathar. **21**

Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. **22** Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he would certainly tell Saul! I am guilty of all the deaths in your father's house!

**23** Stay with me. Don't be afraid! Whoever seeks my life is seeking your life as well. You are secure with me."

**1** They told David, "The Philistines are fighting in Keilah and are looting the threshing floors."

Guzik - 1 Samuel 23:1-29

### ***1 Samuel 23 - David Saves Keilah; David Escapes from Saul***

A. David saves Keilah from the Philistines.

1. (1-4) God directs David to fight against the Philistines and deliver the city of Keilah.

Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors." Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah." But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah.



How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" Then David inquired of the LORD once again. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand."

a. **Then they told David:** When David was hiding out in the *stronghold* (1Sa. 22:5) he was safe, but he couldn't be reached in a time of need to help God's people. One of the great reasons why God called David out of the stronghold, into a place of greater danger (the land of Judah), was so that he could serve and bless God's people more effectively.

b. **The Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors:** Why did they bring this plea for help to *David*, and not to *King Saul*? Because Saul was not fulfilling his role as king over Israel. It was *Saul's* job to protect Keilah, it was *Saul's* job to fight against the Philistines, but Saul wasn't doing his job, so the LORD called David to do it.

i. God loved His people too much to let them suffer with an unfaithful king. If Saul wasn't up to the task, God would raise up a man who was, and David was the one. God directed David to act like a king even if he was not the king yet.

c. **Therefore David inquired of the LORD:** This shows David's wisdom and godliness. Some might have immediately said, "This isn't my responsibility, it is Saul's. Let him deal with it."

Others might have immediately said, "Let's go! I can fix this problem! Get out of my way and let's do it!" Either course was foolish, but David was wise because he **inquired of the LORD**.

i. When David inquired of the LORD, he was willing to do just as the LORD commanded. Sometimes we inquire of the LORD, but our

minds are already made up - we will do certain things, and we will not do certain things. That isn't really inquiring of the LORD at all!

d. David **inquired of the LORD** - but how?

1Sa. 23:6 says, *Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keliath, that he went down with an ephod in his hand.* An ephod was a special apron that priests would wear, to cover over their clothing, so the sacrificial blood and gore would splash on the ephod, not so much on their clothing.

i. It is likely that this wasn't just any ephod; this was the ephod of the High Priest, which had the *breastplate of judgment* (Exo. 28:15) attached to it (Exo. 28:28). The breastplate had in it a pouch with two stones, known as *the Urim and Thummim* (Exo. 28:30). When David **inquired of the LORD**, he probably asked Abiathar to use the *Urim and Thummim*.

ii. How did the priest use the *Urim and Thummim* to inquire of the LORD? The names *Urim and Thummim* mean "Lights and Perfections." We aren't sure what they were or how they were used. Most think they were a pair of stones, one light and another dark, and each stone indicated a "yes" or "no" from God. The idea is that High Priest would ask God a question that could be answered with a "yes" or a "no," reach into the breastplate, and pull out the stone indicating God's answer. This ephod, with the *Urim and Thummim*, was more helpful to David than a thousand soldiers, because it helped him discern the will of God.

iii. Many Christians today would consider

the *Urim and Thummim* as crude tools of discernment; sort of an Old Testament "Magic 8-Ball." In fact, using the *Urim and Thummim* was superior to the tools many Christians today use: relying purely on feeling, or on outward appearances, or simply using no discernment at all.

iv. "Each child of God has his own Urim and Thummim stone, which is a conscience void of offense, a heart cleansed in the blood of Christ, a spiritual nature which is pervaded and filled by the Holy Spirit of God." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

v. The key to the effectiveness of the *Urim and Thummim* was that *God's Word* gave them. In seeking God through the *Urim and Thummim*, one was really going back to God's Word for guidance, because it was the word of God that commanded their place and allowed their use. Today, if we have the same focus on God's Word, He will guide us also. One old preacher was asked to explain the *Urim and Thummim*. He said, "Well, this is how I understand it. When I need to know God's will, I get out my Bible and I do a lot of *usin' and thummin'* through my Bible, and God always speaks to me." More Christians would know God's will if they did more *usin' and thummin'!*

vi. Also, notice that David was not asking God about something that God had already revealed in His Word. David didn't ask, "Now LORD, do You really want me to keep that third commandment?" David was fulfilling the LORD's *revealed* will to the best of his ability, and trusted that God would lead him in His *specific* will.

e. **Go, and attack the Philistines, and save Keliah:** By all outward appearance, this was a crazy thing to do. First, David had 400 men whose had thin resumes and bad credit

reports ( *everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him*, 1Sa. 22:2); not exactly a regular army! Second, David had enough trouble with Saul, and he didn't need to add trouble from the Philistines - one enemy is usually enough! Third, this would bring David wide open out before King Saul, and expose him to that enemy also. This was a dangerous course of action!

i. Then why do it at all? David had two great reasons: the command of God, and the need of the people. David was willing to spend himself, to endanger himself, so that he obey the command of God, and meet the need of the people.

f. **But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah."** David's men counseled him to *not go to Keilah*. We can understand their counsel; but we should not agree with it. We should thank God at this point that David *became captain over them* (1Sa. 22:4), and that this wasn't a democracy.

g. **David inquired of the LORD once again:** Wisely, David took the words from his men into great account. He wrestled with their advice, and saw that in many ways it made a lot of sense. At the same time, he knew this was an issue that had to be decided before the LORD.

h. **Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand:** God likes to confirm His word, especially when He directs us to do something hard or unusual. This time, the LORD not only confirmed His previous command, but He also gave a *promise* with it: **I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.**

i. The *promise* was intended to give both David and his men more and more confidence in God and His command.

2. (5) David rescues the people of Keilah.

And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

a. **So David and his men went to Keilah**

**and fought:** It isn't enough to inquire of God's will, or even to know God's will. We must have a commitment to *obey* God's will, even when it is difficult.

b. God blessed the obedience of David: **Struck them with a mighty blow . . . David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.** We also see that God perfectly kept His promise to David ( *I will deliver the Philistines into your hand*, 1Sa. 23:4).

3. (6-8) Saul comes against David at Keilah.

Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, *that* he went down *with* an ephod in his hand. And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

a. **So Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand."** Saul thought that **God** had blessed him and given him victory over David. It was true that God lead David to Keilah, and it was was true that this exposed David to Saul's attack. But it was *not true* that the LORD had **delivered him into my hand**, as Saul said.

i. "He easily believed what he greedily desired, though his own experience had oft showed him how strangely God had delivered [David] out of his own hands, and what a singular care God had over [David]." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

b. Saul is in no place to discern the will of God, because he cares nothing for the worship or service of God. Indeed, **Abiathar** the priest is with David, not Saul, and he has the things of the priesthood with him

(**an ephod in his hand**). But Saul doesn't care about losing the priesthood and the true worship of God. All he cares about is getting David.

c. **The Saul called all the people together for war:** For war? Against whom? Against the Philistines? Against the Edomites? Against the Amelekites? Against the Moabites? No, against David, the one who had served Saul faithfully, and the one whom God has anointed and blessed! Saul makes the common mistake of assuming that someone is an enemy of the LORD just because they are *our* enemy.

i. Saul *wouldn't* go to Keilah to save the people of Keilah against the Philistines, but he *would* go there to try and save himself against David. Saul is totally motivated by self-interest.

4. (9-13) David escapes from Keilah.

When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?"

And the LORD said, "They will deliver *you*." So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

a. **Bring the ephod here:** David was in a bad place, and he was in a bad place because the LORD led him there. Some might be angry with

the LORD, and even give a "I told You this would happen!" to God. Instead, David did the right thing - he inquired of the LORD again!

i. "Here is a second inquiry. God loveth to be often sought unto by his praying people (Luk. 18:1), and the therefore answereth them by degrees, that he may frequently hear from them." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>) b. **He will come down . . . They will deliver you:** This is another example of David seeking God through the priest using the *Urim and Thummim*. Notice how the questions are presented in a "Yes or No" format, because that is how the *Urim and Thummim* were used.

i. **They will deliver you:** Why would the people of Keliath betray the man who just saved their city? No doubt, they heard of

Saul's brutal massacre of the priests (1Sa. 22:16-19), so they knew Saul would stop at nothing to kill David. David knew this also

**(Saul seeks to come to Keliath to destroy the city of my sake).**

ii. "They look upon Nob so lately razed and harassed, and fear to fare

accordingly." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

iii. Was this word of the LORD demonstrated to be false? Not at all. Obviously, the word of the Lord to David was true *depending on David's actions*. If David would have stayed in Keliath, the word would have surely come to pass. "We may observe from this that, however positive a declaration of God may appear that refers to any thing in which man is to be employed, the prediction is not

intended to *suspend* or *destroy free agency*, but always comprehends it in some particular condition." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>) c. **So David and his men . . . arose and departed from Keliath:**

David could have stood and fought, and there was something in him that probably wanted to. But David knew

that it was not of the LORD, and that a lot of innocent people would get hurt in the battle. So David, who was a great warrior, humbled himself and escaped. David was not the kind of man to sneak away from a battle, but he didn't let his pride get the best of him in this matter.

i. **Saul . . . halted the expedition:** David's humble heart saved the city of Keliiah. In this, he shows the same heart as the greater

Son of David, Jesus, who through His humble action spared us against not only Satan, but against the righteous judgment of God. Saul directed his attack against David instead of Keliiah, and so did God pour out His judgment on Jesus, the Son of David, instead of us.

B. David narrowly escapes Saul in the Judean wilderness.

1. (14-15) David takes refuge in Wilderness of Ziph.

And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David *was* in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest.

a. **The Wilderness of Ziph:** Ziph was a town below the southern tip of the Dead Sea, with a dramatically varied landscape.

i. This was not a comfortable or easy place to be. God guided and protected David, but it wasn't comfortable or easy. This was an essential time for God's work in David's life.

He became a man after God's heart in the shepherd's field, but he became a king in the wilderness.

b. **Saul sought him every day:** Saul was a determined enemy, and unrelenting in pursuit of David. Saul has



become so obsessed with killing David that he doesn't give attention to the work God had called him to do.

c. **But God did not deliver him into his**

**hand:** Saul can be as determined as he pleases, but he is not dictating these events - God is.

Man can intend, attempt, and work all kinds of evil, **but God** is still in charge.

2. (16-18) Jonathan and David meet each other for the last time.

Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to

David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that." So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

a. What did Jonathan do for David? Jonathan

**strengthened his hand in God.** Jonathan could not rescue David, but he **strengthened his hand in God.** Jonathan couldn't give David all the answers, but he **strengthened his hand in God.** Jonathan couldn't stay with David, but he **strengthened his hand in God.**

What a precious gift Jonathan gave David!

i. "He comforted and supported him against all his fears, by minding him of God's

infallible promises made to him, and his singular providence which hitherto had and still would be with him." (Poole <biblio.

htm>)

b. **Do not fear:** In encouraging David,

Jonathan gave him reasons to **not fear**. David could reject fear because God would ultimately protect him (**Saul my father shall not find you**). David could reject fear because God's promise would come to pass (**You shall be king over Israel**). David could reject fear because he had loyal friends like Jonathan (**I shall be next to you**).

i. In this wonderful encouragement, Jonathan would be proved mostly correct, but not completely correct. God had promised that David would be the next king when Samuel anointed David (1Sa. 16:1-13). Based on that, Jonathan could know that **my father will not find you**, and that David would **be king over Israel**. Jonathan had known these things for a long time (1Sa. 18:4), and could say them confidently in the LORD. But then Jonathan added his own desire and aspiration: **I shall be next to you**. Because of their great friendship, David and Jonathan looked forward to the day when David would be king and Jonathan would support him and help him. But it would never come to pass, because Jonathan would die before David came to the throne. We see in Jonathan's encouragement a mix of a word from God and an expression of hope and desire.

c. **Even my father knows that:** Saul knew that David would be the next king, that the LORD had ordained it. Yet, he fights against the will of God with everything he has. Sometimes we do the same thing; we know what God's will is, but we oppose it by not doing it. How foolish!

d. **The two of them made a covenant before the LORD:** David and Jonathan had already a covenant (1Sa. 18:3, 20:16), but now they confirm it again. Renewing or reconfirming a covenant does not make the previous covenant less precious; it makes it more precious and valid.

i. Was Jonathan being disloyal to his father here? Not at all. "Now all this Jonathan could do, consistently with his *duty* to his *father* and his *king*. He knew that David had delivered the kingdom; he saw that his father was ruling unconstitutionally; and he knew that God had appointed David to

succeed Saul. This he knew would come about in the order of Providence; and neither he nor David took one step to hasten the time." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

ii. This was the last time David and Jonathan would ever see each other on the earth, and their relationship was still confirmed in the commitment of **covenant**.

3. (19-23) The Ziphites betray David.

Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king's hand." And Saul said, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, for you have compassion on me. Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, *and* who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides; and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you.

And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah."

a. **Our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand:** For every faithful Jonathan, there is also a **Ziphite**, someone willing to betray.

Many a godly man or woman has known both friends and betrayers, just as Jesus did.

b. **Blessed are you of the LORD:** Saul was so spiritually warped that he could say to the betrayers of an innocent man, " **Blessed are you of the LORD.**"

c. **I am told that he is very crafty:** It wasn't David's craftiness that had kept him from Saul's clutches so far. It was the goodness and faithfulness of the LORD. But Saul doesn't want to believe that, so he thinks and says David's protection is due to his being **very crafty**.

d. At this time, David expressed his feelings to the LORD in song, and that song is preserved for us in Psalm 54. The title to that Psalm reads, *A Contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"*

i. In Psalm 54, David called out to the LORD for help: **Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength** (Psa. 54:1).

ii. In Psalm 54, David understood his enemies: **For strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life; they have not set God before them** (Psa. 54:3).

iii. In Psalm 54, David expressed his confidence in the LORD: **Behold, God is my helper; the LORD is with those who uphold my life** (Psa. 54:4).

iv. In Psalm 54, David let go of the bitterness and fear and praised the LORD instead: **I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good** (Psa. 54:6).

v. "Observe how David left the treachery of his supposed friends with the One who is sufficient to deal with them. He is now looking at God. First he was looking at his enemies and these supposed friends of his, but now he sees them through God. If you begin with God, your enemies grow small. If you begin with the enemy, you may never reach God." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>) 4. (24-29) David's dramatic, narrow escape.

So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. But David and his men *were* in the Wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

When Saul and his men went to seek *him*, they told David. Therefore he went down to the rock, and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon. Then Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them. But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!"

Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape. Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

**a. Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side**

**of the mountain:** If only Saul had known that David was so close! They are on the same **mountain** (what we would think of as a large hill), separated by the ridge. Saul did his best to trap David, and it looked like he would.

**b. But a messenger came to Saul:** Out of the blue - actually, out of heaven - **a messenger came to Saul**, and drew him away from David to fight the Philistines. The hand of God was so evident that David and his men made a memorial of the spot: **they called that place the Rock of Escape.**

*© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** So David asked the LORD, "Should I go and strike down these Philistines?" The LORD said to David, "Go, strike down the Philistines and deliver Keilah."

**3** But David's men said to him, "We are afraid while we are still here in Judah! What will it be like if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" **4** So David asked the LORD once again. But again the LORD replied, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."

**5** So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the

Philistines. He took away their cattle and thoroughly defeated them. David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

**6** Now when Abiathar son of Ahimelech had fled to David at Keilah, he had brought with him an ephod. **7**

When Saul was told that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has boxed himself into a corner by entering a city with two barred gates." **8** So Saul mustered all his army to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

**9** When David realized that Saul was planning to harm him, he told Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod!" **10**

Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, your servant has clearly heard that Saul is planning to come to Keilah to destroy the city because of me. **11** Will the leaders of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, please inform your servant!"

Then the LORD said, "He will come down." **12** David asked, "Will the leaders of Keilah deliver me and my men into Saul's hand?" The LORD said, "They will deliver you over."

**13** So David and his men, who numbered about six hundred, set out and left Keilah; they moved around from one place to another. When told that David had escaped from Keilah, Saul called a halt to his expedition. **14** David stayed in the strongholds that were in the desert and in the hill country of the desert of Ziph. Saul looked for him all the time, but God did not deliver David into his hand.

**15** David realized that Saul had come out to seek his life; at that time David was in Horesh in the desert of Ziph.

**16** Then Jonathan son of Saul left and went to David at Horesh. He encouraged him through God. **17** He said to him, "Don't be afraid! For the hand of my father Saul cannot find you. You will rule over Israel, and I will be your second in command. Even my father Saul realizes this." **18** When the two of them had made a covenant before the LORD, David stayed on at Horesh, but Jonathan went to his house.

**19** Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Isn't David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? **20** Now at your own discretion, O king, come down. Delivering him into the king's hand will be our responsibility."

**21** Saul replied, "May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me. **22** Go and make further arrangements. Determine precisely where he is and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is extremely cunning.

**23** Locate precisely all the places where he hides and return to me with dependable information. Then I will go with you. If he is in the land, I will find him among all the thousands of Judah."

**24** So they left and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the desert of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. **25** Saul and his men went to look for him. But David was informed and went down to the rock and stayed in the desert of Maon. When Saul heard about it, he pursued David in the desert of Maon. **26** Saul went on one side of the mountain, while David and his men went on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, but Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men so they could capture them. **27** But a messenger came to Saul saying, "Come quickly, for the Philistines have raided the land!"

**28** So Saul stopped pursuing David and went to confront the Philistines. Therefore that place is called Sela Hammahlekoth. **29** (24:1) Then David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of En Gedi.

**1** (24:2) When Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, they told him, "Look, David is in the desert of En Gedi."

Guzik - 1 Samuel 24:1-22

### ***1 Samuel 24 - David Spares Saul's Life***

A. David doesn't kill Saul when he has the opportunity.

1. (1-2) Saul seeks David in the Wilderness of En Gedi.

Now it happened, when Saul had returned from

following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David *is* in the Wilderness of En Gedi." Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

**a. When Saul had returned from following**

**the Philistines:** In the previous chapter, God miraculously delivered David by drawing Saul away to fight the Philistines at the moment Saul was ready to capture David. But when Saul was done with the Philistines, he went back to pursuing David.

i. We often wish that our next victory, or our present victory, would be a *permanent* victory. We wish that the spiritual enemies

who pursue us like Saul pursued David would simply give up, and we wouldn't have to bother with them any more. But even when we have victory and they are sent away, they come back, and will keep coming back until we go to glory with the LORD.

That is the only *permanent* victory we will find.

**b. The Wilderness of En Gedi:** In the barren, desolate territory surround the Dead Sea, there is a canyon that runs westward from the Dead Sea. That canyon is called **En Gedi**, and one can still visit there today and see the flowing spring that makes a good sized creek flow down the canyon, and makes **En Gedi**, with its waterfalls and vegetation seem more like a tropical paradise than the middle of the desert.

i. As you walk up this canyon, you also notice the numerous *caves* dotting the hills.

This is a great place for David and his men to hide out! Because it is in the middle of barren desert, scouts could easily detect approaching troops. There was plenty of water and wildlife, and many caves and defensive positions.

2. (3) Without knowing, Saul comes to a cave



where David and his men are hiding.

So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there *was* a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) a. **The sheepfolds** indicates that this was a large cave, large enough to shelter a flock of sheep, so all or most of David's 600 men could be hidden in the recesses of the cave.

b. **Saul went in to attend to his needs**: Since the Bible is a real book, dealing with real people, living real lives, we aren't surprised to see it describing Saul's attention to his personal needs. But something as basic and common as that was timed and arranged by God, without Saul having any knowledge of God's timing or arrangement of things.

i. The fact that Saul **went in to attend to his needs** also meant that he would come into the cave *alone*. His soldiers and bodyguards would be out of the cave waiting for him.

c. **David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave**: What are the chances?

Saul must attend to his personal needs at the very moment he passes by the very cave where

David hides. This was no coincidence, but

arranged by God to test David, to train David, and display the godly heart of David.

3. (4-7) David restrains himself and his men from killing Saul.

Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'

" And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's *robe*.

Now it happened afterward that David's heart

troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD." So David

restrained his servants with *these* words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on *his* way.

a. **The men of David said to him:** David's men were excited at the opportunity in front of them, and believed it was all a gift from God.

They knew it was no coincidence that Saul came alone into that cave at that moment. So, they thought this was an opportunity from God to kill Saul.

i. Apparently, on some previous occasion,

God had promised David: **Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do him as it seems**

**good to you.** They believed that this was the fulfillment of the promise, and that David needed to seize the promise by faith and by the sword!

b. **David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe:** We can imagine David listening to this counsel from his men, and with his sword, creeping quickly towards Saul, covered by the darkness of the cave. David's men are excited; their lives as fugitives are about to end, and they will soon be installed as friends and associates of the new King of Israel. But as David came close to Saul, and put forth his

sword, he didn't bring it crashing down on Saul's neck or thrust it through his back.

Instead, he **secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.**

i. Some wonder how David could have done this without being detected. Saul may have laid his robe down in one part of the cave, and attended to his needs in another part, so David did not have to get right next to Saul to cut off a corner of his robe. Or, it may also be that there was enough noise and commotion from the thousands of men

outside of the cave, along with their horses, so that David was simply undetectable.

ii. What made David decide, "I won't kill Saul; instead I will just cut off the corner of his robe"? He knew that God's promise said, "You will inherit the throne of Israel." He knew that Saul was in the way of that promise. But he also knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority, and it was *God's* job to take care of Saul, not David's. David wanted the promise to be fulfilled, but he *refused to try and fulfill God's promise through his own disobedience*.

iii. Sometimes, when we have a promise from God, we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. This is *always wrong*. A husband may say, "God has promised me abundant life according to Joh.

10:10. God wants me to have fullness of joy according to Psa. 16:11. I can't have abundant life or fullness of joy being married to my wife, so I am going to leave her because I have found someone who does give me fullness of joy and abundant life.

Thank you LORD for Your promise!" *This is always sin*. God will fulfill His promises, but He will do it *His way*, and do it *righteously*.

Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise, willing to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22).

Even more, we need to be like Jesus, who didn't take Satan's offer to "win back the world" at the expense of obedience (Luk.

4:5-8).

iv. Many people in David's situation would find many excuses to justify killing Saul.

Think of what one might say: "It was self-defense, because Saul was out to kill me."

"It's all right, because God promised me the throne anyway."

"It's all right because I am in the right, and even Jonathan knows that I deserve the throne." "This is a God-given opportunity and I should take it." Or even,

"I'm just so tired of running and fighting Saul. This can end all of that now." But David refused to make any such excuses, and had a radical, obedient trust in God

instead. David couldn't have read the Book of Romans yet, but he knew its truth better than many who have: *Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Rom. 12:21).

v. In all this, we see that David knew not only how wait *on* the LORD, but he also knew how to wait *for* the LORD. "We wait *on* the Lord by prayer and supplication, looking for the indication of his will; we wait *for* the Lord by patience and submission, looking for the interposition of his hand." (Meyer

<Meyer.htm>) David was determined that

when he sat on the throne of Israel, it

wouldn't be because *he* got Saul out of the way, but because *God* got Saul out of the way. He wanted God's fingerprints on that work, not his own, and he wanted the clean

conscience that comes from knowing it was God's work.

vi. In all this, we also see that David's heart didn't store up bitterness and anger towards

Saul. Even as Saul made David's life

completely miserable, David kept taking it to the LORD, and he received the cleansing

from the hurt and the bitterness and the

anger that the LORD can give. If David had

stored up bitterness and anger towards Saul,

he probably wouldn't have been able to resist the temptation to kill him at what seemed to be a "risk free" opportunity.

vii. "We win most when we appear to have yielded most, and gain advantages by refusing to take them wrongfully. The man who can wait for God is a man of power." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

c. **David's heart troubled him:** What a tender conscience in David! Many would only be troubled that they did not take the opportunity to kill Saul. David only cut off the corner of Saul's robe, yet his **heart troubled him**. Why? Because the robe was a symbol of Saul's royal authority, and David felt bad - rightly so, according to the heart of God - that he had done *anything* against Saul's God appointed authority.

i. David expresses this when he said, **The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed . . . seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.**

David knew better than anyone that Saul was a troubled and corrupt leader, yet it was in God's power to take him away - and David would not put his hand to do what was only the LORD's to do.

ii. "It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonouring to God's anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession and reparation?" (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

iii. "Beemasters tell us that those are the best hives that make the greatest noise; so is that the best conscience that checketh for smallest sins." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>) d. **So David restrained his servants with these words:** David not only kept himself from taking vengeance upon Saul, he **restrained his servants** also. Many men, in the same situation, would say, "Well, I won't kill Saul now. But if one of my servants does, what can I do?" and therefore leave the door wide open for Saul to be killed. But David wouldn't do that, and he **restrained his servants**.

i. **With these words:** What words? The words of a humble, tender conscience before God. The words of a man who was convicted at merely cutting off a corner of Saul's robe. When David's servants saw how godly David was, and how much he wanted to please God in *everything*, their hearts were **restrained** from doing any evil against Saul.

B. David appeals to Saul.

1. (8) David reveals his presence to Saul.

David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!"

And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

a. **David . . . went out of the cave:** David took a big chance here, because he could have simply remained in hiding, secure in the fact that Saul had not found him. But he surrendered himself to Saul, because he saw the opportunity to show Saul his heart towards him.

b. David showed great submission to Saul: **My lord the king . . . David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed twice.** We might think that David had the right to come to Saul as an *equal*. "Well Saul, we've both been anointed to be king. You've got the throne right now, but I'll have it some day and you know it."

So from one anointed man to another, look at how I just spared your life." That wasn't David's attitude at all. Instead, he said: "Saul, you are the boss and I know it. I respect your place as my leader and as my king."

c. When **David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed twice** he also showed great trust in God, because he made himself completely vulnerable to Saul. Saul could have killed him very easily at that moment, but David trusted that if he did what was right before God, God would protect him and fulfill the promise.

2. (9-15) David's speech to Saul.

And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my eye* spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he *is* the Lord's anointed.' Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let

the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you.

After whom has the king of Israel come out?

Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?

Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand."

a. **Why do you listen to the words of men:** With this, David shows great kindness and tact to Saul. David knew very well that Saul's fear of David came from Saul himself, and not from anyone else. But David puts the blame on

nameless others, so that it is easier for Saul to say " *They were wrong*" instead of " *I was wrong.*" Even in confronting Saul, David is covering Saul's sin!

i. "He prudently and modestly translates the fault from Saul to his followers and evil

counselors." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

ii. Some might have said, "David, lay it on the line! Tell it like it is!" and David will, to some extent. But even as he does, he will show mercy and kindness to Saul. David will

fulfill Pro. 10:12: *Love covers all sins*, and 1Pe. 4:8: *Love will cover a multitude of sins.*

**b. I will not stretch out my hand against**

**my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed:** This principle of not striking out against God's anointed leaders is good and important, but sometimes has been misused.

i. The phrase *touch not the Lord's anointed* is in vogue among some Christians, and among many leaders. And often, to them, it

means this: "You should never speak against a pastor or a leader. He is above your

criticism or rebuke, so just keep quiet."

Sometimes it is used even to prevent a

Biblical evaluation of a man's teaching. They like to use David's actions here as an

example. But when David recognized that

Saul was **the LORD's anointed** and

refused to harm him, what David would not

do is *kill* Saul. But he did humbly confront Saul with his sin, and hope to God that Saul would change his heart. But it is entirely

wrong for people to use the idea of *touch not the Lord's anointed* to insulate a leader from all evaluation or accountability.

**c. See the corner of your robe in my hand:** This was proof that David had full opportunity to kill Saul, yet did not take that opportunity. As David showed Saul the **corner of**



his **robe**, Saul must have heard the Spirit of God speaking loudly in his heart.

i. Why did David cut off a **corner of** Saul's **robe**? We are amazed that that was all David cut off, yet we can see God's leading

in cutting off a corner of Saul's robe. The robe is a picture of Saul's royal authority, and through this God sends a message to Saul: "I am cutting away your royal authority."

ii. In 1Sa. 15:27-28, the prophet Samuel rebuked Saul for his hard-hearted disobedience to God. In his distress, Saul tried to keep Samuel from leaving, and grabbed his robe, and a portion of the prophet's robe tore away. When Saul was left holding the torn piece of Samuel's robe, Samuel said to him: *The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.* Now, when David confronts Saul with the torn robe, Saul *must* be reminded of this incident, and God's message to him was loud and clear.

d. **Let the LORD judge between you and**

**me**: David didn't need to do anything more to defend himself before Saul; he referred the matter to the LORD. David would let God plead his case and be his judge. David didn't just say,

" **My hand shall not be against you**," he proved it by not killing Saul when he had the opportunity.

i. The Living Bible gives a good sense of 1Sa. 24:12: *Perhaps the Lord will kill you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you.* In fact, David *protected* Saul by restraining his men!

ii. It was inevitable that Saul would be judged, and that he would lose the throne. But it was absolutely God's business to

accomplish that, and the business of no one else. Jesus established the same principle in Mat. 18:7 when He said, *offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the*

*offense comes!* God's judgment is *God's* business. We also put ourselves in a bad place when we take it upon ourselves to be

instruments of God's judgment.

e. **Wickedness proceeds from the wicked:** David used this proverb to make a point. "Saul, if I was really as wicked as your advisors say I am, if I really was out to kill you, I would have done that wicked act in the cave. Because no wickedness proceeded from me when I had the opportunity, it shows my heart is not wicked towards you."

f. **Therefore let the LORD be judge . . . and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand:** David tells Saul, "I'm still trusting God, that He will deliver me out of your hand." Instead of finding a way out of his trial in the flesh, David did the harder thing - he trusted in God to deliver him, instead of trusting in himself.

C. Saul's reaction to David.

1. (16-19) Saul honors David's mercy towards him.

So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, " *Is this your voice, my son David?*" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David: "You *are* more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.

And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely?

Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day."

a. **Is this your voice, my son David?** Why does Saul respond so emotionally, and does not kill David? Because Saul had lived on the delusion that David was out to get him, and

David's refusal to kill Saul when he had the chance proved beyond doubt that this was false.

i. David's *obedience to God* and his *love to Saul* made all the difference in softening Saul's heart.

b. **You are more righteous than I . . . you have dealt well with me . . . you did not kill me . . . the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this**

**day:** What a change of heart in Saul! Every change David could have hoped for in Saul has happened, and Saul really seems sincere about it (**Saul lifted up his voice and wept**). Saul's heart was melted by the coals of kindness David heaped upon his head.

2. (20-22) Saul looks to the future.

"And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but

David and his men went up to the stronghold.

a. **I know indeed that you shall surely be**

**king:** Saul knew it all along (1Sa. 23:17), but now he *really* knows it.

b. **Therefore swear to me know by the LORD that you will not cut off my**

**descendants after me:** Saul simply wants the same kind of promise from David that David made to Jonathan in 1Sa. 20:13-16. In that day, when one royal house replaced another, it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the old royal house. Saul knew that one day, David and his descendants would rule over Israel,

and he wants David to promise that David and his descendants will not kill or mistreat the descendants of Saul.

i. "How then could David destroy so many of Saul's sons, 2Sa. 21:8-9? David could bind

himself by his oaths, but he could not bind

God, to whose good pleasure all promises,

vows, and oaths must in all reason be

submitted; and that was done by God's

command, and God was well pleased with

it, 2Sa. 21:14." (Poole <biblio.htm>) c. **And Saul went**

**home, but David and his men went up to the**

**stronghold:** Why didn't David go back home with Saul, and be restored to his home and his place at the palace?

Because David knew that as much as Saul

meant it at the moment, the struggle would be to *remain* in the place of victory.

i. Many times, a person repents and claims

to recognize their sinful ways just like Saul did. But the validity of repentance and a

changed heart isn't demonstrated by the

emotion or sincerity of a moment. It is

demonstrated by the ongoing direction of

one's life, and David had every right to say,

"I'm going to stay in the stronghold until I see the direction of Saul's life."

ii. "What a miserable picture Saul is! What is the use of saying, 'I have played the fool,' if he goes on playing the fool? What use are his tears and confession before David if he

doesn't act upon his remorse?" (Redpath

<Redpath.htm>)

iii. In fact, it is *worse* to have this kind of emotional response

if it *doesn't* result in repentance. "If a man is emotionally

upset, as Saul was, and awakens to his condition, but only

weeps about it and still doesn't

obey God, his second state is a thousand

times worse than the first. Emotion that does not lead to action only leads deeper into sin and rebellion." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

© 2001 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** So Saul took three thousand select men from all Israel and went to find David and his men in the region of the rocks of the mountain goats. **3** He came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave. Saul went into it to relieve himself.

Now David and his men were sitting in the recesses of the cave. **4** David's men said to him, "This is the day about which the LORD said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you can do to him whatever seems appropriate to you.'" So David got up and quietly cut off an edge of Saul's robe. **5** Afterward David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off an edge of Saul's robe. **6** He said to his men, "May the LORD keep me far away from doing such a thing to my lord, who is the LORD's chosen one, by extending my hand against him.

After all, he is the LORD's chosen one." **7** David restrained his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. Then Saul left the cave and started down the road.

**8** Afterward David got up and went out of the cave. He called out after Saul, "My lord, O king!" When Saul looked behind him, David kneeled down and bowed with his face to the ground. **9** David said to Saul, "Why do you pay attention when men say, 'David is seeking to do you harm'? **10** Today your own eyes see how the LORD delivered you - this very day - into my hands in the cave.

Some told me to kill you, but I had pity on you and said, 'I will not extend my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's chosen one.' **11** Look, my father, and see the edge of your robe in my hand! When I cut off the edge of your robe, I didn't kill you. So realize and understand that I am

not planning evil or rebellion. Even though I have not sinned against you, you are waiting in ambush to take my life. **12** May the LORD judge between the two of us, and may the LORD vindicate me over you, but my hand will not be against you. **13** It's like the old proverb says: 'From evil people evil proceeds.' But my hand will not be against you. **14** Who has the king of Israel come out after? Who is it that you are pursuing? A dead dog? A single flea? **15**

May the LORD be our judge and arbiter. May he see and arbitrate my case and deliver me from your hands!"

**16** When David finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" Then Saul wept loudly. **17** He said to David, "You are more innocent than I, for you have treated me well, even though I have tried to harm you! **18** You have explained today how you have treated me well. The LORD delivered me into your hand, but you did not kill me. **19** Now if a man finds his enemy, does he send him on his way in good shape? May the LORD repay you with good this day for what you have done to me. **20** Now look, I realize that you will in fact be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. **21** So now swear to me in the LORD's name that you will not kill my descendants after me or destroy my name from the house of my father."

**22** David promised Saul this on oath. Then Saul went to his house, and David and his men went up to the stronghold.

**1** Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned him. They buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David left and went down to the desert of Paran.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 25:1-44

### ***1 Samuel 25 - David, Nabal, and Abigail***

A. David's anger at Nabal.

1. (1) Samuel, the great prophet and judge over Israel, dies. Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

a. **Then Samuel died:** This great man, who was dedicated unto the LORD and served Him from his youngest days, now dies. As godly as he was, it did not save him from an earthly death, because he was till a descendant of Adam. But God's work in Israel did not end when Samuel died; His work never is dependent on only one man.

i. If it is written **then Samuel died**, it is also written **and David arose**. God's work may begin with a man, but it never ends with one man. God continues and sustains His work as He pleases.

b. **The Israelites gathered together and lamented for him:** As well they should have! Samuel seemed to be unappreciated by Israel during his life (1Sa. 8:1-7), but at least he was honored in his death.

c. Samuel's heritage lived on in a remarkable way. 1Ch. 9:22 suggests that Samuel laid the foundation for the organization of the Levites for the service of the sanctuary which was completed by David and Solomon. 1Ch. 26:27-28 says that Samuel began to collect the treasures for the building of the temple in Solomon's day. 2Ch. 35:18 says that Samuel remembered the Passover, and kept Israel in remembrance of God's great deliverance. Psa. 99:6 and Jer. 15:1 commemorate Samuel as a man of great intercession. Heb. 11:33 puts Samuel in God's "Hall of Faith."

d. This is the last we see of Samuel in the book of 1 Samuel - except for a very interesting incident in 1 Samuel 28!

2. (2-3) A man named Nabal, his wife and his character.

Now *there was* a man in Maon whose business *was* in Carmel, and the man *was* very rich. He had three thousand

sheep and a thousand goats.

And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. The name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And *she was* a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man *was* harsh and evil in *his* doings. And he *was of the house of* Caleb.

a. **And the man was very rich:** The first thing we learn about this man is where he lived (**Maon**, with his business in **Carmel**), and that he was a **very rich** man (**three thousand sheep and a thousand goats**).

i. There are four kinds of riches. There are riches in what you *have*, there are riches in what you *do*, there are riches in what you *know*, and there are riches in what you *are* -

riches of *character*. Nabal was a **very rich** man, but only rich in what he had. He had the lowest kind of riches.

ii. This should remind us of what Jesus said: material riches are a definite obstacle to the kingdom of God (Mat. 19:23-26). It is not impossible for a rich man to be godly, but being rich makes walking with God harder. If he is to be a godly man, one of the key things there must be in the heart of a rich man is *generosity*. We should look for this in the character of Nabal!

b. **And he was shearing his sheep in**

**Carmel:** This was the "harvest time" for a sheep rancher. Because it was like "harvest time," by ancient traditions, sheep shearing time was a time of lavish hospitality towards others.

i. "Sheep-shearing was traditionally celebrated by feasting, with enough and to spare." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

c. **The name of the man was Nabal:** This is another indication of his character, because the name **Nabal** means *fool*. In the ancient culture of Israel, names were often



connected with a person's character; we don't know if Nabal was given this name or he earned it, but we will certainly see that he matches his own name.

i. We read that Nabal was **harsh and evil**

**in his doings** (which needs no explanation, only appreciation, understanding that the Bible is never given to overstatement in such matters). The fact that **he was of the house of Caleb** may also be told as a bad description of Nabal, because **Caleb** means *dog*, and to be **of the house of a dog** was no compliment.

ii. "As the word *caleb* signifies *a dog*, the *Septuagint* have understood it as implying a man of a *canine disposition*, and translate it thus . . . *he was a doggish man*. It is understood in the same way by the *Syriac* and *Arabic*." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

d. **Abigail . . . a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance**: Nabal's wife was both **beautiful** and wise, in contrast to Nabal himself. The Bible gives Abigail great praise when it says she was of **beautiful appearance**, because the only other women who have this Hebrew phrase applied to them are Rachel (Gen. 29:7) and Esther (Est. 2:7).

i. How did a woman like this ever get matched up with a man like Nabal? We can understand it in that day of arranged marriages. Clarke says that she was "married to the boor mentioned above, probably because he was *rich*. Many women have been thus sacrificed." Trapp also says, "But what meant her father to match her to such an ill-conditioned churl? It is likely he married her to the wealth, not to the man. Many a child is cast away upon riches."

ii. But there are many Abigails today, who are in that place not because the marriage was arranged, but because they chose it. "It is remarkable how many Abigails get married

to Nabals. God-fearing women, tender and gentle in the sensibilities, high-minded and noble in their ideals, become tied in an indissoluble union with men for whom they can have no true affinity, even if they have not an unconquerable repugnance." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

iii. "A woman may still find herself in Abigail's pitiful plight. To such a one there is but one advice - you must stay where you are. The dissimilarity in taste and temperament does not constitute a sufficient reason for leaving your husband to drift. You must believe that God has permitted you to enter on this awful heritage, partly because this fiery ordeal was required by your character, and partly that you might act as a counteractive influence. You must stay as you are. It may be that some day your opportunity will come, as it came to Abigail. In the meantime do not allow your purer nature to be bespotted or besmeared. You can always keep the soul clean and pure." (Meyer)

iv. "May I say to you lovingly, but firmly, if such a circumstance has befallen you, that is no reason for you to invoke the law of the country to get out of the entanglement.

Perhaps God knew that you needed the fiery trial to humble you and make you a testimony to your partner. The Bible says you must stay as you are. Maybe there will come to you one day, as there came to Abigail, a new opportunity; but until then, it is for you to prove the grace and power of the Lord in your heart to strengthen you and

keep you pure." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>) 3. (4-9) David asks for compensation for his valuable service to Nabal.

When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus you shall say to him who lives *in prosperity*: 'Peace *be* to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let *my* young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.'" So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

a. David made a request of Nabal: **Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and your son David.** David makes this request because he had performed a valuable service for Nabal, serving as protection for his flocks in a time when Philistine raids were common. To our modern ears, it might sound like David was running some kind of

"protection racket," but that wasn't the case at all. He performed a worthy, valuable service for Nabal, and expects to be compensated.

i. In fact, David "bent over backwards" to do all this right, and make the request right. A close look shows just how right David did in all this.

b. David did right in this, because he waited until he heard **that Nabal was shearing his sheep.** David protected Nabal's shepherds and flocks for a long time, but did not

expect to be compensated until Nabal himself made his money at the "harvest" of sheep shearing.

c. David did right in this, because he was very polite to Nabal. He did this through messengers (**David sent ten young men**) so Nabal would not be intimidated. He sent the messengers with a greeting full of warmth and kindness (**Peace be to you**), so that Nabal would not give out of fear or intimidation.

d. David did right in this, because he carefully and patiently gave Nabal an "itemized receipt"

for services rendered (**Your shepherds were with us . . . nor was there anything missing . . . ask your young men, and they will tell you**).

e. David did right in this, because he politely reminded Nabal of the traditions of generosity surrounding harvest and sheep shearing time (**For we come on a feast day**).

f. David did right in this, because he did not demand any specific payment from Nabal, or set a price - he simply left it up to Nabal's generosity (**Please give whatever comes to**

**your hand**). Then, David's messengers simply waited for the reply.

4. (10-12) Nabal's reply to David's request.

Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said,

"Who *is* David, and who *is* the son of Jesse?

There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* to men when I do not know where they *are* from?" So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words.

a. **Who is David, and who is the son of**

**Jesse?** It can't be that Nabal did not know who David was, because David was famous all throughout Israel (1Sa. 18:5-7). Nabal says this as a direct insult to David - knowing who

he is, but refusing to recognize him. In our modern way of speaking, Nabal would say, "Who does he think he is?"

**b. There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master:**

Nabal deepens his insult of David, saying that David is simply a rebellious servant. This was completely false, because David had continually (though not perfectly) conducted himself wisely when attacked by Saul.

**c. Shall I then take my bread . . . my water**

**. . . my meat . . . my shearers, and give it:** Nabal shows what an ungenerous man he is. He looks at everything as *his*, instead of the *LORD's*. True, Biblical generosity doesn't think, "This is mine and I will share it with you." It thinks, "All that I have belongs to the LORD, and so you can have some of it also."

5. (13) David reacts to Nabal's insulting response.

Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

**a. Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword."** David receives Nabal's response exactly the way Nabal intended it to be received: with great insult. But Nabal is not dealing with a weak, no-account man; he is dealing with a great soldier and warrior. In our modern way of speaking, David would have said to his men, "Lock and load!" In a western movie, he would have said, "Mount up, boys!"

David was ready to fight.

i. We don't wonder why David was ready to fight, because Nabal had provoked him so greatly. But this is not a high moment for David. He isn't responding the way the LORD would have him respond to an insult, or even to an attack.

ii. When we are insulted, the LORD would

have us bear it with love and kindness, returning their evil with good. This is high ground to walk on, but it is commanded by Jesus: *You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.* (Mat. 5:38-39) iii. As well, we see that David doesn't show Nabal the same kindness and longsuffering that he showed to Saul. In just the previous

# chapter, we saw how David spared Saul's

life, when Saul not only insulted David but actually attacked him and tried to kill him. David was able to be kind and longsuffering to Saul, but it seems to have been harder for him to do it towards someone he perceived as his equal, or lower than himself. Often, this is true measure of our character - not how we treat our superiors, but how we treat our equals or those "beneath" us in some way or another.

## **b. About four hundred men went with**

**David:** David is not coming to Nabal just to make a statement, but to wipe him out. That is why he arms himself and his men, and why he leaves some men behind to watch the stuff and serve as reinforcements.

i. Most of us would have responded to Nabal just as David did. Our sympathies might be with David, but our hearts and our obedience must be with Jesus Christ.

B. Abigail intercedes between David and Nabal.

1. (14-17) Abigail hears of how Nabal responded to David.

Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. But the men *were* very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined

against our master and against all his household. For *he is* such a scoundrel that *one* cannot speak to him."

a. **He reviled them:** One of the servants who witnessed Nabal's response to David's men tells Nabal's wife Abigail that Nabal **reviled** David's men, and by extension, David. To **revile** means "to treat with contemptuous language," and Nabal laid it on David's men and David.

b. **The men were very good to us:** Nabal's servants tell Abigail of the valuable service David's men performed for them. This lets Abigail know that David and his men *deserved* compensation.

c. **Know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined:** Nabal's servants could read the handwriting on the wall. They knew that David would not take such an insult - theft, actually - lying down. For their own sake, and for the sake of the household, they ask Abigail to do something (**consider what you will do**).

d. Why didn't they say this to Nabal? Because they knew **he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him**. The book of Proverbs had not been written yet, but they still knew the truth of Pro. 17:12: *Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly*. Therefore, they made this life-or-death appeal to Abigail.

2. (18-20) Abigail prepares a present for David and his men. Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred *loaves* of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted *grain*, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded *them* on donkeys. And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. So it was, *as* she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them.

a. **Abigail made haste:** Since she was *a woman of good understanding* (1Sa. 25:3), she knew that time was of the



essence, and something had to be done quickly.

b. **Two hundred loaves of bread . . . two skins of wine . . . five sheep already dressed . . . one hundred clusters of raisins:**

David simply, politely, asked Nabal for fair payment for services rendered, and Nabal refused. Now, Abigail is doing what Nabal *should* have done, but *didn't* do.

c. The fact that Abigail was able to gather so much food so quickly shows how wealthy Nabal was. If this much food was on hand, it makes Nabal's ungenerous reply to David all the worse.

3. (21-22) David vows to massacre Nabal and his entire household.

Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this *fellow* has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *belongs* to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who *belong* to him by morning light."

a. **Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has:** David's sense of hurt was justified. He had been wronged by Nabal, and Nabal was entirely in the wrong and David was entirely in the right. The feelings may have been justified, but what will David do with those feelings?

b. **And he has repaid me evil for good:** David is accurate, but not right in his heart. He has the facts straight, but not his heart.

c. **If I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light:** This makes David's intention clear - he plans to massacre Nabal and all the males of his household. This was the expected reaction (Nabal's own servants expected it according to 1Sa. 25:17). But God was calling David to go further than what the world might expect.

i. David had so wonderfully resisted the temptation to take vengeance against Saul in 1 Samuel 24; but here, it seems that he

will fail when a similar temptation comes again. This reminds us of our constant need to be on guard.

ii. "Does it not show beyond all possible doubt that I cannot stand against the enemy of my soul unless the Lord upholds me moment by moment? This story tells me that however long I may have been on the Christian path, however often I may have overcome one temptation or another, however many times I have defeated sin in one area, it can strike in another and crush me in a moment." (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

4. (23-31) Abigail's appeal to David.

Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, *on me let this iniquity be!* And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name *is*, so *is* he: Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, *as the LORD lives and as your soul lives*, since the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord.

Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant.

For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the

battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, *as from* the pocket of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

a. **When Abigail saw David:** Because of the hilly terrain (*she went down under cover of the hill*, 1Sa. 25:20), Abigail could remain hidden from David right up until they met face to face.

It also seems that **Abigail saw David** first, and when David first saw her, she was humbled before him, at the head of a great train of gifts and provisions.

i. David and his men were charging forth to kill a man who had terribly insulted and stolen from David. David had just sworn an oath: *May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light* (1Sa.

25:22). But now, in his angry, agitated state, something unexpected makes David and his whole company come to an immediate stop: a great procession of gifts, and at the head of that procession, beautiful woman bowing down before David. This had to make a startling impression on the angry, agitated David.

ii. It would be "astonishing to find the lady of the land prostrated on her face in obeisance to David." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

iii. David also had focused his wrath against every *male* of Nabal's household, but here is a *woman* of Nabal's household. Because of David's anger and agitation, what Abigail did here probably could not have been done by any man in Nabal's household (except for Nabal himself), no matter how humble and wise that man was.

b. **She hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground:** Abigail will make an appeal to David, and she makes her appeal in utmost humility. She doesn't come to David as a superior (as the beautiful, rich, and privileged often do) or even as an equal; she comes to David as his humble servant.

c. In this appeal, Abigail did many things very right:

i. When she first heard of the crisis, she immediately went into action ( *Then Abigail made haste*, 1Sa. 25:18). She knew this was an urgent situation, so she acted with urgency.

ii. Abigail immediately, and with her first words to David, takes the blame on herself (**On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be!** ). Abigail didn't do this because she really believed she was guilty. She put

herself in the place of punishment because she knew that David would punish her differently than her husband Nabal.

iii. Abigail asks for permission to speak, instead of taking command of the conversation (**Please let your maidservant speak in your ears**).

iv. Abigail smoothly suggests the positive

outcome to David in her appeal (**since the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand**). She states it in a way that almost guides David towards her suggested outcome.

v. Abigail brought David a present (**now this present**), but was wise enough to say that it was for **the young men who follow**

David, not for David himself. To say that it was for David himself would suggest that David was in this just for the compensation or the money, and that David's insulted dignity could be bought off with money.

vi. Abigail plainly, straightforwardly, asked for forgiveness (**Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant**).

vii. Despite David's present anger and agitation - which is clearly sin - Abigail speaks of David's character in high terms, regarding his present unmentioned state as an aberration (**my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days**).

viii. Abigail reminded David of the LORD's promise for his life (**the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house**). She guides David to look beyond the immediate aggravating circumstances to the bigger promise of God. Since Abigail knows that God has promised David would one day be king, this must have been known throughout Israel.

ix. Abigail asks David not to do something he will later regret, when God's promise is

ultimately fulfilled (**that this will be no grief to you . . . that you have shed**

**blood without cause**). This is perhaps the single best thing that Abigail said; she wisely asked David to consider the outcome of his present course, and how it would be a bad

outcome. She asks him to let the LORD settle the matter, instead of taking vengeance into his own hands.

d. Abigail also did some things wrong in her appeal to David:

i. She did all this - which was no small thing, either in the doing or the meaning of it -

without her husband's counsel or approval

( *But she did not tell her husband Nabal, 1Sa. 25:19*).

ii. She openly, and severely, criticizes her husband to David (**this scoundrel Nabal . . . Nabal is his name, and folly is with**

**him**). No wife should speak this way of her husband, and no husband should speak this way of his wife.

iii. Even as she confesses her sin to David (**on me let this iniquity be!** ), she also excuses and justifies herself, letting David

know that she really doesn't think she has sinned at all (**I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent**).

iv. She almost suggests to David that he kill the guilty Nabal (**let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal**), but he spare the rest of the household because they are innocent (**shed blood without cause**).

v. She makes herself available for David's

future consideration, perhaps in an inappropriate way (**When the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant**).

vi. Abigail was not outstandingly submissive or respectful to her husband Nabal. Though there is no explanation in the Bible, perhaps it was justified because this was a legitimate life-or-death situation. If Abigail didn't do what she did, then Nabal and scores of innocent men would die. But the point of the passage is how submissive and respectful Abigail is towards David, not Nabal.

vii. "It may be thought a great crime, that she traduceth her husband in this manner;

but this may be said for her, that she told them nothing but what they all knew concerning him, and that she only seemed to take away that which he never had, indeed, to wit, his good name, that she preserve that which he had, and which was more dear and important to him, even his

life and soul." (Poole <biblio.htm>) e. **The life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a**

**sling**: This perhaps is the strongest point of Abigail's appeal, and she uses a wonderful turn of speech. She says, "David, you are like a bundle that the LORD holds closely and securely to Himself. Your enemies are like rocks that the LORD will sling away." This invites David to *act* like a man who is close to the LORD!

i. David was taking his 400 men to do what God could do as easily as throwing a stone out of sling. This had to remind David of a time when he really did trust God for the

victory - when he cast a stone out of a sling and killed Goliath. Through her wise words, Abigail refocused David's attention from Nabal back unto the LORD.

ii. "In effect she said, 'David, your soul is wrapped up in a bundle of life in the Lord your God, and the strength of that bundle lies in the identity of God with all that goes on inside it. He is there with you! Therefore, the life of a man after God's own heart is safe in God's keeping, and what can the churlishness of Nabal do against you? Why should you stoop to his level?'" (Redpath <Redpath.htm>)

f. Abigail's appeal to David was so glorious, because it *lifted him up* instead of *beating him down*. David was clearly in the wrong, and Abigail wanted to guide him into the right. But she didn't do it by being negative, by emphasizing to David how wrong and angry and stupid he was acting - though he was in fact acting that way! Instead, Abigail emphasized David's glorious calling and destiny, and the general integrity of his life, and simply asked him to consider if what his present course of action was consistent with that destiny and integrity.

g. Look how *positive* Abigail is in her appeal: **the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house . . . my lord fights the battles of the LORD . . . evil is not found in you throughout your days . . . the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD God . . . when the LORD has done . . . all the good that He has spoken concerning you . . . has appointed you ruler over Israel**. She is lifting David up, not beating him down with criticism and accusation.



h. Look how *submissive* Abigail is in her appeal: **fell on her face before David . . . bowed down to the ground . . . she fell at his**

**feet . . . Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant . . . then remember your**

**maidservant.** In her appeal, Abigail calls David **lord** (not as God, but as a term of high respect and submission) 13 times. She calls herself David's **maidservant** five times. She doesn't come to David as a superior or even as an equal, but appealing to him as someone who has rightful authority over her.

i. Abigail is a marvelous model of "sweetly speaking submission." Many Christian wives have the idea of "silent submission." They say, "I know my husband is wrong, but I won't tell him. Submission means I should shut up." That is wrong, and they should look to Abigail as an example. Other Christian wives have the idea of "sharply speaking submission." They say, "I know my husband is wrong, and God has

appointed me to tell him. And boy, will I!" That is wrong, and they should look to Abigail as an example. Abigail gives the right example -

submission that speaks, but speaks sweetly instead of sharply.

j. Husbands have a huge responsibility in all this. First, they are responsible to encourage their wives to speak, instead of reinforcing the idea of "silent submission." Next, they are to carefully and prayerfully receive what their wives say. Finally, they need to understand that even if the advice isn't given as wonderfully as Abigail's was towards David, the basic message may still be from the LORD, even if the delivery was fouled up.

k. Abigail's submission to Nabal was not outstanding. But her submission to David was. And David's submission to the LORD was

equally outstanding; by giving up the fight, he had to trust God to take care of Nabal. And God certainly did!

5. (32-35) David thanks God for Abigail's appeal, and receives her advice.

Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed *is* the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

And blessed *is* your advice and blessed *are* you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. For indeed, *as* the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hastened and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have

been left to Nabal!" So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her,

"Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

a. **Blessed be the LORD God of Israel:**

David was on a sinful course, and Abigail, through her bold, quick, and wise appeal, stopped him from sin. He knew that God spoke to him through Abigail's appeal (**who sent you this day**).

b. David's anger was justified, and his were rights were violated. But David responded wrongly, because vengeance and retribution belong only to God. Here, David is taught that this principle didn't only apply between him and Saul, but between him and everyone.

i. David is being taught a good lesson - our hurt feelings never justify disobedience.

When others sin against us, we may *feel* justified in sinning against them, but we are never justified by our hurt feelings.

ii. "So little is there lost by making God our umpire." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

c. **You have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself**

**with my own hand:** David can also thank God, because Abigail successfully reminded him of his destiny: to reign over Israel in righteousness and integrity. If David had slaughtered Nabal and his household, it would forever be a black mark against David among Israelites. They would forever wonder if they could really trust him. And it might have sealed his doom before Saul, because for the first time, David would have given Saul a legitimate *reason* to hunt him down as a criminal.

i. "It was a major lesson in David's training for kingship, and one that he was going to need to keep before him at future crises.

The implication is that violence breeds violence, whereas restraint makes way for a peaceful solution. This he knows with his head, but he may fail to remember it when his blood is roused." (Baldwin)

ii. "Hereby it plainly appears that oaths whereby men bind themselves to any sin are null and void; and as it was a sin to make them, so it is adding sin to sin to perform them." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

d. **Blessed is your advice, and blessed are you:** David was man enough and wise enough, to take counsel from a woman. He knew that the issue wasn't Abigail's gender, but that God was using her at that time and place. David does well both to receive her advice, and to praise her for her boldness in bringing it.

e. **So David received from her hand:** It is important to remember that Abigail did not come to David empty-handed. One reason her appeal was effective was because she *paid David what was owed to him*. When David received it from Abigail, he acknowledged that Nabal had paid the bill and there was nothing outstanding.

f. David knew the blessing here of being *kept from sin*. It surely is a blessing to be forgiven our sins; but it is an even greater blessing to be kept from sin.

i. We would need to seek forgiveness of our sins less often if we would seek the LORD more diligently to be kept from sin to begin with. "There is no way of keeping out the fire of sin except by having the fire of grace blazing within the spirit. We must fight fire with fire." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>) ii. What things might God use to keep us from sin? 1. The work of God in our hearts.

2. Early education as children. 3. Positive friendships and associations. 4. The laws of the land. 5. A low station in life. 6. Physical infirmities. 7. Amazing works from God's hand. 8. A word to our conscience from a messenger of God.

C. Nabal dies and David marries Abigail.

1. (36-38) God strikes Nabal dead.

Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *like* a stone. Then it came about, *after* about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

a. **There he was, holding a feast in his**

**house:** Nabal lives up to his name; he is a fool.

His life is in imminent danger - his wife knows it, all his servants know it, but he doesn't know it. He eats and gets drunk as if all is fine, and he hasn't a care in the world.

i. In this regard, Nabal is a picture of the sinner who goes on rejecting God, without regard to God's coming judgment. Just as

certain as it was that David would have killed Nabal, so it is certain that God will judge the sinner who continues to reject Him.

b. **Like the feast of a king:** All Nabal had to do was invite David to this tremendous feast, and Nabal's life would have been spared.

Nabal's own greed and foolishness was his undoing.

c. **His wife had told him these things:**

"Wonderful, saith one, was the force of this woman's speech, that as it before allayed

David's rage, so now it pierceth Nabal to the heart. This power was not in her human

eloquence, but proceeded from the Spirit of God." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

d. **His heart died within him, and he became like stone . . . the LORD struck**

**Nabal, and he died:** Abigail's wise action saved Nabal from David, and saved David from himself. But it could not save Nabal from God's judgment. Nabal was never out of God's reach, and when it was the right time, God took care of him.

i. In 1Sa. 25:33, David was grateful that Abigail's appeal had kept him *from avenging myself with my own hand*. This proves that David did not need to avenge himself with his own hand; God was more than able to do it.

ii. Jesus may have had Nabal in mind when He taught the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luk. 12:15-21). That parable describes a man who dies with everything - and nothing.

iii. "All which time he lay like a block in his bed, without repentance or confidence in God; but condemned of his own conscience, he went to his place without noise. Let this

be a warning to drunkards." (Trapp <Trapp.  
htm>)

2. (39-44) David marries Abigail.

So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife." Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of

David, and became his wife. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who *was* from Gallim.

**a. For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head:**

David knew exactly what the death of Nabal meant. It was God's judgment against Nabal, which the LORD showed when David decided to let the LORD avenge him instead of avenging himself.

**b. David sent and proposed to Abigail:** In 1Sa. 25:31, Abigail asked David, *then remember your maidservant*. Here, David certainly remembers her, and takes her as his wife.

i. Was this inappropriate? Wasn't David already married to Saul's daughter Michal? (1Sa. 18:27) The writer of 1 Samuel explains that at this time, David was not married to Michal, because Saul had taken her away

and given her to another man to spite David  
(David will get Michal back in 2Sa. 3:13-16).

So, Abigail is not really David's second wife; she is his "second first wife."

ii. "By his marriage with Abigail, it is probable he became possessed of all Nabal's property in Carmel and Maon." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

c. **David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives:** Though Abigail was David's "second marriage," with **Ahinoam**, David takes his second wife, and will add many more wives.

i. Was this inappropriate? It wasn't directly sin, because God hadn't commanded against

it. But it did go against God's ideal, God's plan for marriage, for oneness in a marriage relationship. David was a man of great passions, and as a part of that he had many wives. But because David never really followed God's plan and purpose for marriage, his family life was never blessed and peaceful. Family trouble would bring David some of the greatest trials of his life.

ii. "Since Ahinoam is always mentioned before Abigail (1Sa. 27:3; 30:5) and bore David's first son (2Sa. 3:2), it is likely that David had married her already." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

d. **Here is your maidservant, a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my lord:** Abigail did not allow her success with David, or the death of Nabal, to make her arrogant or bossy. She greets the servants of David with the greatest humility.

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**2** There was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. This man was very wealthy; he owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. At that time he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. **3** The man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. She was both wise and beautiful, but the man was harsh and his deeds were evil. He was a Calebite.

**4** When David heard in the desert that Nabal was shearing his sheep, **5** he sent ten servants, saying to them, "Go up to Carmel to see Nabal and give him greetings in my name. **6** Then you will say to my brother, "Peace to you and your house! Peace to all that is yours! **7** Now I hear that they are shearing sheep for you. When your shepherds were with us, we neither insulted them nor harmed them the whole time they were in Carmel. **8** Ask your own servants; they can tell you! May my servants find favor in your sight, for we have come at the time of a holiday. Please provide us - your servants and your son David - with whatever you can spare." **9** So David's servants went and spoke all these words to Nabal in David's name. Then they paused. **10** But Nabal responded to David's servants, "Who is David, and who is this son of Jesse? This is a time when many servants are breaking away from their masters! **11** Should I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers and give them to these men? I don't even know where they came from!"

**12** So David's servants went on their way. When they had returned, they came and told David all these things.

**13** Then David instructed his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So each one strapped on his sword, and David also strapped on his sword. About four hundred men followed David up, while two hundred stayed behind with the equipment.

**14** But one of the servants told Nabal's wife Abigail, "David sent messengers from the desert to greet our lord, but he screamed at them. **15** These men were very good to



us. They did not insult us, nor did we sustain any loss during the entire time we were together in the field. **16**

Both night and day they were a protective wall for us the entire time we were with them, while we were tending our flocks. **17** Now be aware of this, and see what you can do.

For disaster has been planned for our lord and his entire household. He is such a wicked person that no one tells him anything!"

**18** So Abigail quickly took two hundred loaves of bread, two containers of wine, five prepared sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred bunches of raisins, and two hundred lumps of pressed figs. She loaded them on donkeys

**19** and said to her servants, "Go on ahead of me.

I will come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

**20** Riding on her donkey, she went down under cover of the mountain. David and his men were coming down to meet her, and she encountered them. **21** Now David had been thinking, "In vain I guarded everything that belonged to this man in the desert. I didn't take anything from him.

But he has repaid my good with evil. **22** God will severely punish David, if I leave alive until morning even one male from all those who belong to him!"

**23** When Abigail saw David, she got down quickly from the donkey, threw herself down before David, and bowed to the ground. **24** Falling at his feet, she said, "My lord, I accept all

the guilt! But please let your female servant speak with my lord! Please listen to the words of your servant! **25** My lord

should not pay attention to this wicked man Nabal. He simply lives up to his name! His name means 'fool,' and he is indeed foolish! But I, your servant, did not see the servants my lord sent.

**26** "Now, my lord, as surely as the LORD lives and as surely as you live, it is the LORD who has kept you from shedding blood and taking matters into your own hands.

Now may your enemies and those who seek to harm my lord be like Nabal. **27** Now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the servants who follow my lord. **28** Please forgive the sin of your servant, for the LORD will certainly establish the house of my lord, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD.

May no evil be found in you all your days! **29** When someone sets out to chase you and to take your life, the life of my lord will be wrapped securely in the bag of the living by the LORD your God. But he will sling away the lives of your enemies from the sling's pocket! **30** The LORD will do for my lord everything that he promised you, and he will make you a leader over Israel. **31** Your conscience will not be overwhelmed with guilt for having poured out innocent blood and for having taken matters into your own hands. When the LORD has granted my lord success, please remember your servant."

**32** Then David said to Abigail, "Praised be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you this day to meet me! **33**

Praised be your good judgment! May you yourself be rewarded for having prevented me this day from shedding blood and taking matters into my own hands! **34**

Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives – he who has prevented me from harming you – if you had not come so quickly to meet me, by morning's light not even one male belonging to Nabal would have remained alive!"

**35** Then David took from her hand what she had brought to him. He said to her, "Go back to your home in peace. Be assured that I have listened to you and responded favorably."

**36** When Abigail went back to Nabal, he was holding a banquet in his house like that of the king. Nabal was having a good time and was very intoxicated. She told him absolutely nothing until morning's light. **37** In the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him about these

matters. He had a stroke and was paralyzed. **38** After about ten days the LORD struck Nabal down and he died.

**39** When David heard that Nabal had died, he said, "Praised be the LORD who has vindicated me and avenged the insult that I suffered from Nabal! The LORD has kept his servant from doing evil, and he has repaid Nabal for his evil deeds." Then David sent word to Abigail and asked her to become his wife.

**40** So the servants of David went to Abigail at Carmel and said to her, "David has sent us to you to bring you back to be his wife." **41** She arose, bowed her face toward the ground, and said, "Your female servant, like a lowly servant, will wash the feet of the servants of my lord." **42**

Then Abigail quickly went and mounted her donkey, with five of her female servants accompanying her. She followed David's messengers and became his wife.

**43** David had also married Ahinoam from Jezreel; the two of them became his wives. **44** (Now Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel son of Laish, who was from Gallim.) **1** The Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Isn't David hiding on the hill of Hakilah near Jeshimon?"

Guzik - 1 Samuel 26:1-25

### ***1 Samuel 26 - David Spares Saul's Life Again***

A. David's second opportunity to kill Saul.

1. (1-4) The Ziphites betray David again.

Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying,

"Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?" Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. And Saul

encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come.

a. **Now the Ziphites came to Saul:** The **Ziphites** - the people of the city of Ziph - had betrayed David's whereabouts to Saul before (1Sa. 23:19-23). Now, they try to gain King Saul's favor again by helping Saul find David again.

b. Saul went, **having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David.** This means Saul has gone back on his previous repentance shown in 1Sa. 24:16-21. At that

time, David had opportunity to kill Saul, but did not take it. When David boldly demonstrated this to Saul, the king was greatly moved emotionally, and publicly repented for his murderous intentions toward David. Saul's repentance was deep, sincere, and emotional - but it didn't last very long.

i. **Three thousand chosen men** reminds us that Saul had a great numerical advantage. 3,000 against 600 is a significant advantage.

c. **David therefore sent out spies:** David, as wise and capable commander, constantly monitors the movements of Saul. David knows where Saul is, but Saul does not know where David is.

2. (5-8) David's second opportunity to kill Saul.

So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people encamped all around him.

Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai

said, "I will go down with you." So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him. Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not *have to strike* him a second time!"

a. **Now Saul lay within the camp:** The King James Version says that *Saul lay within the trench*. The translation is pretty literal from the Hebrew, but gives the wrong idea. The idea is that the perimeter of Israeli army camp was marked by the tracks of their wagons, and it was within the perimeter of the camp that Saul slept. **Saul lay within the camp** is a good translation of the idea.

b. **So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped:** The last time David and Saul met, David was simply hiding from Saul, and Saul happened upon the place where David hid. This time, David actively seeks Saul out.

i. **So David arose** means that David himself went. He could have sent any of his 600 men to do this job, and from a military sense, it made more sense to send someone else. Why should David take on such a dangerous mission? The fact that David did this shows his boldness and courage; the outcome of it all shows God was leading him in it.

c. **David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army:** As the entire army sleeps, Saul sleeps near **the commander of his army**.

Then David, with a trusted assistant (**Abishai the son of Zeruiah**), secretly creeps down to where Saul and Abner

sleep. With Saul's **spear stuck in the ground by his head**, and all asleep, Saul is completely vulnerable.

d. **Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day"**

: Here, David receives the same advice as on the previous occasion he had to kill Saul

(1Sa. 24:4). Each time, David's associates

pointed out that this circumstance was not an accident, God designed it - and the design was for David to take righteous vengeance upon Saul.

i. Abishai even makes it easy for David:

**Please let me strike at once with the spear.** David would not raise his hand

against Saul; Abishai would do it, and not

feel bad about it in the slightest way. David could say to himself and everyone else, " / did not kill Saul."

ii. Abishai also weaves into the matter an

element of poetic justice: **the spear** used to kill Saul would be the king's own spear,

stuck in the ground by his head. The spear

that was thrown at David in attempted

murder before (1Sa. 18:10-11 and 19:9-10),

would now be used as the instrument of the

LORD's righteous judgment! It all might

have seemed to be perfectly given from the

hand of God!

3. (9-12) David's response to the opportunity to kill Saul.

And David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the

Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" David said furthermore, "

As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The

LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the

Lord's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug

of water that *are* by his head, and let us go." So David took

the spear and the jug of water *by* Saul's head, and they got

away; and no man saw *it* or knew *it* or awoke. For they *were* all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

a. **Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed,**

**and be guiltless:** It wasn't that David thought Saul was right. David knew more than anyone that Saul was deeply in sin. But David knew that even a sinning Saul was still the **anointed** king over Israel (1Sa. 10:1). That would only change when God changed it; David would not **stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed**.

He knew he would be guilty before God if he did.

i. We might think that at this time, David had more righteous reason than ever to kill Saul. Now, Saul had gone back on a previous promise to leave David alone. Many of us, if we were in David's position, would have said "I showed love and let him off once before. I'm full of love, but I'm not stupid. Saul had his chance and he blew it; this time, this opportunity is from God!"

ii. But love, at least in the eyes of the world, will sometimes act in what the world considers to be a stupid way. Jesus said that we should forgive, and forgive, and forgive again (Mat. 18:21-22).

iii. In addition, Saul's sin against David did not make him less the anointed king of Israel. Though this was a trial that required supernatural endurance and love from David, it still would have been sin for him to kill Saul.

iv. "Though Saul be a cruel tyrant, and rejected by God, yet he is our sovereign lord and king; and I, though designed king, as

yet am but a private person, and his subject; and therefore cannot kill him without sin, nor will I consent that you shouldst do it." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

**b. The LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish:**

David knew that it wasn't "hard" for God to kill Saul. The LORD was more than able to kill Saul at any time He chose.

Every breath Saul took was a gift from God. God could have allowed any wicked man to kill Saul at any time. When it came to striking down an anointed king of Israel, God did not need the services of a godly, righteous man like David!

i. *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord* (Rom. 12:17-21). If vengeance belongs to God, it does not belong to us, so we are to love our enemies and never repay evil with evil.

ii. We might even say that since Saul deserved it, it was the "right thing" to kill Saul. But if it was the "right thing," this was the "wrong way." Often when we have a right thing in front of us, we will be tempted to pursue it in a wrong way.

iii. David's greater Son, Jesus, showed us how to refuse to pursue the right thing the wrong way. Jesus rejected Satan's shortcut to the cross (Luk. 4:5-8). Jesus never did miracles just to promote Himself (Joh. 6:30-33). Jesus went the way of the cross instead. Jesus shows us that God's way may be more difficult - but it is always better.

iv. David knew to *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you* (Mat. 6:33).

Our job is to seek first the kingdom of God, and He will bring things to pass as we do.

**c. David took the spear and the jug of**



**water by Saul's head:** David would not kill Saul, but he did take the spear and the jug of water as evidence that he had the opportunity to kill Saul. Probably, David noticed that **a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them** all, and knew there was a reason for it.

B. David confronts Saul again with the evidence of his mercy.

1. (13-16) David chides Abner, Saul's body guard.

Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance *being* between them. And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Do you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who *are* you, calling out to the king?"

So David said to Abner, " *Are* you not a man? And who *is* like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. This thing that you have done *is* not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed.

And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the jug of water that *was* by his head."

a. **Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king?**

In this vivid scene, David implies that *he* cares more for Saul's life than Abner does.

b. **See where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head:** This dramatic evidence - like the evidence of the corner of Saul's robe in 1Sa. 24:11 - was undeniable proof that David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but did not do it.

2. (17-20) David calls out to Saul.

Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, " *Is* that your voice, my son David?" And David said, " *It is* my voice, my lord, O king." And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil *is* in my hand?"

Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if *it is* the children of men, *may* they *be* cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

a. David speaks to Saul with genuine humility (**my lord, O king . . . my lord . . . please let my lord . . . his servant**). Since David was so right, and Saul was so wrong, it would have been easy for David to project a superior attitude towards Saul, but he didn't.

b. **What have I done, or what evil is in my hand?** David first asked Saul to consider the facts, and to clearly think about what he was doing.

c. **If the LORD has stirred you up against me . . . if it is the children of men:** Next, David made easier for Saul to repent. David knew very well that the LORD or other men had not stirred up Saul, but rather it came from Saul's own bitterness, carnality, and jealousy. But he offers these suggestions to Saul, to given him an easier way to repent. He can admit that his actions against David were wrong, without admitting that they originated with himself.

d. **They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, "Go, serve other gods."** Here, David reveals his own heart's struggle under the pressure from Saul's relentless persecution. What hurts David the most is that he can't go to the house of God, and openly be with the people of God, and live his life after the LORD

as he longs to. The pressure of all this tempts David to consider leaving Israel all together and going among people who worship other gods.

e. **Now therefore, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD:** David concludes his appeal to Saul with a simple request. "Saul, please don't kill me!"

i. "There is a vast deal of dignity in this speech of David, arising from a consciousness of his own innocence. He neither begs his life from Saul, nor offers one argument to prevail upon him to desist from his felonious attempts, but refers the whole matter to God, as the judge and vindicator of oppressed innocence." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

f. **As when one hunts a partridge in the mountains:**

"It is worthy of remark that the Arabs, observing that partridges, being put up several times, soon become so weary as not to be able to fly; they in this manner hunt them upon the mountains, till at last they can knock them down with their clubs. It was in this manner that Saul hunted David, coming hastily upon him, and putting him up from time to

time, in hopes that he should at length, by frequent repetitions of it, be able to destroy him." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

3. (21) Saul apologizes to David.

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."

a. **I have sinned:** The last time Saul was in this situation, he was overcome with emotion.

His feelings seemed right, but his life was not changed (1Sa. 24:16-21). This time, there is

something cold and mechanical about Saul's words. It feels that the words are right, but this time, the feelings aren't even there.

i. On another occasion, Saul "repented" with the right words but no depth of heart. In

1Sa. 15:24-25 and 15:30, Saul said the words, " *I have sinned*," yet he was still far more concerned about his image before the people than the condition of his heart and life before God.

ii. Sometimes we know the right words to say - we know what sound spiritual and right - but our hearts really aren't there. When we sense this in others, we are to love them, deciding to think the best and forgive them (as Jesus described in Luk. 17:3-4). When we sense this in ourselves, we should be honest, then pray mightily that our heart would come into the same right place as our words!

iii. "Good motions that fall into wicked hearts, are like some sparks that fall from the flint and steel into wet tinder; lightsome for the time, but soon out." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

**b. For I will harm you no more . . . Indeed I have played the fool and erred**

**exceedingly:** This is a time when we really wish we could *see* and *hear* what happened, so we can see the expression on Saul's face, and the tone and intonation of his words. It *seems* -

both from the "feel" of the verse and Saul's subsequent actions - that Saul isn't repentant; rather, he simply has a bitter realization that David has got the better of him once again. His words in 1Sa. 26:25 express this also: *You shall both do great things and also still prevail.*

i. "The Apostle makes a great distinction, and rightly, between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of a godly repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Certainly Saul's confession of sin belonged to the former; while the cry of the latter comes out in Psalm 51, extorted from David by the crimes after the years." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

c. Morgan on **I have played the fool**: "In these words we have a perfect autobiography.

In them the complete life-story of this man is told . . . There had been given to him the Spirit of God, the friendship of Samuel, and the devotion of men whose hearts God had touched. He had so acted that the Spirit departed from him; Samuel had been unable to help him; and the hearts of the people had been turned away from him. The whole secret was that he had leaned to his own understanding, had failed to obey, and so had become the evil-tempered man he was, mastered by hatred, and fighting against God."

4. (22-25) David explains to Saul why he did not kill him. And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. May the LORD repay every man *for* his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into *my* hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation." Then Saul said to David, " *May you be* blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

**a. May the LORD repay every man for his**

**righteousness and his faithfulness:** David trusts in the God who blesses the righteous and the faithful. David knew the truth of Heb. 6:10

before it was written: *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name.*

i. David understood the principle Jesus spoke of in Mat. 7:2: *With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* David wanted the "extra big scoop"

of God's mercy given for himself, so David gave Saul the "extra big scoop" of mercy. That generous measure of mercy will be a great blessing to David later in his life.

**b. So let my life be valued much in the**

**eyes of the LORD:** David wanted to fulfill his calling, to be the next king of Israel. But he wanted both the throne and the blessing of God. He refused to take the throne through murder or rebellion. He would wait until it came to him God's way. In this, David trusted that God would protect him when he did eventually come to reign over Israel.

i. David knew that if he wanted God's support when he became king, he must support Saul now.

ii. David held on to this principle, and when he became king, he recognized that his righteousness was rewarded. *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has*

*recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks.*

(Psa. 18:20-27)

c. **David went on his way:** Saul invited David to *return* (1Sa. 26:21), but David did not take the invitation. He would wait and see if the repentant words Saul spoke showed a genuine

repentance in his life. But as David goes **on his way**, he is faced with the temptation he spoke of in 1Sa. 26:19 - the temptation to flee Israel all together and live among the ungodly.

i. "Knowing Saul's unstable and deceitful heart, he would not trust to any of his professions or promises, but kept out of his reach." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

ii. "Since now there is nothing more to be said, David and Saul part, never to see each other again." (Youngblood)

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**2** So Saul arose and

went down to the desert of Ziph, accompanied by three thousand select men of Israel, to look for David in the desert of Ziph. **3** Saul camped by the road on the hill of Hakilah near Jeshimon, but David was staying in the desert. When he realized that Saul had come to the desert to find him, **4** David sent scouts and verified that Saul had indeed arrived. **5** So David set out and went to the place where Saul was camped. David saw the place where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the general in command of his army, were sleeping.

Now Saul was lying in the entrenchment, and the army was camped all around him.

**6** David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" Abishai replied, "I will go down with you."

**7** So David and Abishai approached the army at night and found Saul lying asleep in the entrenchment with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. Abner and the army were lying all around him. **8** Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me drive the spear right through him into the ground with one swift jab! A second jab won't be necessary!"

**9** But David said to Abishai, "Don't kill him! Who can extend his hand against the LORD's chosen one and remain guiltless?" **10** David went on to say, "As the LORD

lives, the LORD himself will strike him down. Either his day will come and he will die, or he will go down into battle and be swept away. **11** But may the LORD prevent me from extending my hand against the LORD's chosen one!

Now take the spear by Saul's head and the jug of water, and let's get out of here!" **12** So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, and they got out of there.

No one saw them or was aware of their presence or woke up. All of them were asleep, for the LORD had caused a deep sleep to fall on them.

**13** Then David crossed to the other side and stood on the top of the hill some distance away; there was a considerable distance between them. **14** David called to the army and to Abner son of Ner, "Won't you answer, Abner?" Abner replied, "Who are you, that you have called to the king?" **15** David said to Abner, "Aren't you a man?

After all, who is like you in Israel? Why then haven't you protected your lord the king? One of the soldiers came to kill your lord the king. **16** This failure on your part isn't good! As surely as the LORD lives, you people who have not protected your lord, the LORD's chosen one, are as good as dead! Now



look where the king's spear and the jug of water that was by his head are!"

**17** When Saul recognized David's voice, he said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" David replied, "Yes, it's my voice, my lord the king." **18** He went on to say, "Why is my lord chasing his servant? What have I done? What wrong have I done? **19** So let my lord the king now listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has incited you against me, may he take delight in an offering. But if men have instigated this, may they be cursed before the LORD!

For they have driven me away this day from being united with the LORD's inheritance, saying, 'Go on, serve other gods!' **20** Now don't let my blood fall to the ground away from the LORD's presence, for the king of Israel has gone out to look for a flea the way one looks for a partridge in the hill country."

**21** Saul replied, "I have sinned. Come back, my son David. I won't harm you, for you treated my life with value this day. I have behaved foolishly and have made a very terrible mistake!" **22** David replied, "Here is the king's spear! Let one of your servants cross over and get it. **23**

The LORD rewards each man for his integrity and loyalty. Even though today the LORD delivered you into my hand, I was not willing to extend my hand against the LORD's chosen one. **24** In the same way that I valued your life this day, may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all danger." **25** Saul replied to David, "May you be rewarded, my son David! You will without question be successful!" So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

**1** David thought to himself, "One of these days I'm going to be swept away by the hand of Saul! There is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines.

Then Saul will despair of searching for me through all the territory of Israel and I will escape from his hand."

Guzik - 1 Samuel 27:1-12

***1 Samuel 27 - David Flees to the Philistines***

A. David joins with the Philistine leader Achish.

1. (1) David's discouraged decision.

And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. *There is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel.

So I shall escape out of his hand."

a. **David said in his heart:** The sad story of 1

Samuel 27 begins with something **David said in his heart.**

He may have never said it out loud; he may have never said it to anyone else; he may have never said it to God. But **David said it in his heart.** What we say in our heart has a tremendous power to shape our thinking, our actions, even our whole destiny.

i. If someone says in their heart, "God doesn't care about me," it will make a difference in their life. If someone says in their heart, "I deserve better than this," it will make a difference in their life. If

someone says in their heart, "I come before others," it will make a difference in their life.

By the same principle, if someone says in their heart, "God loves me and I don't have to earn His love," it will make a difference. If they say in their heart, "I am grateful for every blessing I have," it will make a difference. If someone says, "Others come first," it will make difference in their life.

*What we say in our heart has great power for good or evil, for blessing or cursing.*

b. What did David say in his heart? **Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul.** That was a word of discouragement, coming from a heart that was tired of trusting God for His continued deliverance. God had protected David so many times before, why wouldn't He

continue to protect him from **the hand of Saul**? But in his discouragement, David forgets God's past deliverance.

i. "This was a very hasty conclusion: God had so often interposed in behalf of his life, that he was authorized to believe the reverse." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

ii. David could have asked *himself* for a different opinion. Previously, David declared his great trust in God against all enemies (1Sa. 17:45-47). The David of 1 Samuel 27 should listen to the David of 1 Samuel 17!

iii. "I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart, and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract; my friend was reading to me from

one of my own sermons. Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>) c. What did David say in his heart? **There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines.** David is actually telling himself to leave the land of Israel and go live among the idol worshipping Philistines.

i. In this, David tells himself to do what he feared in 1Sa. 26:19: *For they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'* This temptation, these words in David's heart, had been working their way in for quite a while. Now, David considers something he would have never considered before - leaving the land of God's people, the land of promise, to go and live among the **Philistines!**

ii. **Nothing better?** Was there **nothing better** for David in Israel among God's people than among the ungodly? Is not the love of the LORD, and His kindness, goodness, and mercy something **better**?

But David doubted God's care for him.

iii. "To doubt the lovingkindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin; in

fact, some have even exalted the doubts and

fears of God's people into fruits and grace,

and evidences of great advancement in

experience. It is humiliating to observe that certain ministers have pampered and petted

men in unbelief and distrust of God, being in this matter false to their Master, and to the souls of his people. Far be it

from me to smite the feeble of the flock; but their sins I must and will smite, since it is my firm

conviction, that to doubt the kindness, the

faithfulness, and the love of God, is a very

heinous offense." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.

htm>)

d. What did David say in his heart? **Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.** Before, David trusted in the LORD to protect him from the hand of Saul. Now, David gives up trusting in the LORD, and will instead leave the land of promise, leave the people of God, and find "protection" among the Philistines.

i. **Saul will despair:** What? Will Saul

despair if David leaves the land of promise?

Will Saul despair if David forsakes the people of God and joins the ungodly? No, Saul will

rejoice! It is David who is in **despair**, not Saul.

ii. In his discouraged despair, David is at a place that many find themselves at some

point in their lives. He says, "I give up. I can't take this anymore. The stress of

trusting God is too much, and I have to find protection somewhere else."

iii. Saul could never drive David to the Philistines. If Saul were to tell David, "You must leave the people of God and go live

among the Philistines," David would never bow to it. But *discouragement* and *despair* are more powerful enemies than even Saul was. *Discouragement* and *despair* will drive David to do something that Saul could never make him do.

iv. All of these are reasons to *deal* with what we say in our hearts, to *deal* with discouragement and despair instead of simply ignoring them. When we don't deal with them, they can build and drive us to far worse places.

e. At this point, David looked at Saul, not at God. David listened to himself, not to God. This will always end in trouble.

i. "Always be afraid of being afraid. Failing faith means failing strength. Do not regard despondency as merely a loss of joy, view it as draining away your spiritual life. Struggle against it, for it often happens that when

faith ebbs sin comes to the flood. He who does not comfortably trust God will soon seek after comfort somewhere

else." (Spurgeon <[Spurgeon.htm](#)>)

2. (2-4) David goes over to Achish, leader of Gath.

Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who *were* with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, *and* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more.

a. **David arose and went over with the six hundred men:** David's discouraged and

despairing heart didn't only affect himself; he led **six hundred men** out of the land of promise, over to live with the ungodly. Before David sunk into his pit of discouragement and despair, he would have never dreamed of doing this!

i. 1Sa. 27:3 makes it even worse: **Each man with his household**. David's defection to the Philistines touched even more than the **six hundred men**, it touched all of their families. It directly touched David's household also, because **Ahinoam** and **Abigail** were with him.

b. **So David dwelt with Achish at Gath**: Previously (recorded in 1Sa. 21:10-15), David had briefly gone over to Achish of the Philistines, believing there might be a place of refuge for him there. God allowed that experience to quickly turn sour, and David pretended to be a madman so he could escape. In his discouragement and despair, built upon what David said in his heart, David will go down a road of sin he has been down before.

i. Why does Achish receive him this time, when he would not in 1Sa. 21:10-15? First, it is clear now when it wasn't clear before that David and Achish both share the same enemy, Saul. Second, now David brings with him 600 fighting men, whom Achish can use as mercenaries.

c. **It was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more**: David accomplished his immediate goal, because now Saul has stopped pursuing him. But now David is in a place of compromise that will leave him worse off than before. He is actually submitting to a Philistine master!

i. We have no record of any Psalms that David wrote during this time. This was not a

high point in his spiritual life; he wasn't writing sweet Psalms unto the LORD.

ii. "The sweet singer was mute. He probably acquired a few new strains of music, or even mastered some fresh instruments, while sojourning at Gath, a memory of which is perpetuated in the term *Gittith*, a term which frequently occurs in the inscriptions of the psalms composed afterward. But who would barter a song for a melody, a psalm for a guitar? It was a poor exchange." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

iii. David left Israel and went among the ungodly because he badly needed a sense of security from Saul's unrelenting attacks. But where was David more secure: in Israel and in God's will, or among the Philistines and out of God's will?

iv. "It is impossible to see David taking refuge in Gath, without recognizing that he had lost for the time being the clear vision of God which made him strong against Goliath." (Morgan)

B. David becomes a bandit.

1. (5-7) David receives the city of Ziklag.

Then David said to Achish, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there.

For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?" So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months.

a. **David said to Achish, "If I have now found favor in your eyes."** When did David care about finding favor in the eyes of a Philistine ruler? What a change in David!

b. **Why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?** It smarts to hear David say to a Philistine ruler, " **your servant.**" But why did David want his own city? "From every point of view it was good that David should move away from Achish's capital, but especially because he needed freedom to operate his own independent policy without being observed too closely." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

c. **Let them give me a place . . . that I may dwell there:** In David's mind, this isn't just a visit to the Philistines. He may say to himself that he will someday return to Israel, but he isn't planning on a short stay among the ungodly. He wants to **dwell there**, and he did for **one full year and four months.**

i. Now David, his 600 men and their families lived in a completely new situation. They lived in a fortified city, a formal place of defense. No more finding refuge in the wilderness! But apart from God, they aren't safer in the city.

2. (8-9) David's new occupation: a roving bandit.

And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish.

a. **David and his men went up and raided:** The Hebrew word **raided** comes from the verb *to strip*, with especially the idea of stripping the dead for loot. David would attack these villages or encampments, kill some of the men, strip their bodies for treasure or armor, and rob the people of the village or encampment. Is this a way of life for a man after God's own heart?

b. **The Geshurites, the Girzites, and the**



**Amalekites:** David hasn't *totally* turned against God and His people. For now, he only attacks the enemies of Israel. This probably gave David some comfort, but it is a small consolation to know that you aren't as bad as you possibly could be.

**c. He left neither man nor woman alive,**

**but took away:** Even though he is attacking the enemies of Israel, David is nothing more than an armed robber and a murderer. He kills all the people of the village or encampment he attacks, takes all the spoil, and does all of this without the approval or guidance of God. He now fights wars for profit, instead of for God's honor.

3. (10-12) David lies to Achish.

Then Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David would say, "Against the southern *area* of Judah, or against the southern *area* of the Jerahmeelites, or against the southern *area* of the Kenites." David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring *news* to Gath, saying, "Lest they should inform on us, saying, 'Thus David did.' " And thus *was* his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines. So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever."

**a. And David would say, "Against the**

**southern area of Judah."** David didn't lie to Achish because he was ashamed of what he did.

He lied to gain favor with Achish. He knew that this Philistine leader would be pleased to hear that David raided his own people of Israel.

**b. David would save neither man nor**

**woman alive, to bring news to Gath:** In his raids, David killed all the men and the women, so his lie to Achish would not be exposed.

i. Much later in his life, David will have a far more notorious season of sin with

Bathsheba, and end up killing Bathsheba's

husband Uriah to cover his sin. Though that later event is far more famous, the root of sin that nourished it began way back in 1 Samuel 27. Here, many years before David killed Uriah to cover his sin, he kills these men and women in his raids to cover his sin.

The roots of sin must be dealt with, or they come back with greater strength.

**c. So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever."** Achish felt he was in a good place.

David was trapped in a web, and Achish was the spider. Achish believed that David had burned all his bridges with the people of God. It all looks pretty dark; but David had not - and could not - burn his bridge with God.

4. (28:1-2) David takes sides with the Philistines against Israel.

Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel. And Achish said to David,

"You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men." And David said to Achish, "Surely you know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever."

**a. Achish said to David, "You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men."** David had lied to Achish, telling him that he raided the people of Israel. But now, David is forced to *live the lie* he gave to Achish.

**b. David said to Achish, "Surely you know what your servant can do."** Here, David seems *completely surrendered to the ungodly Achish*. He will fight for the Philistines, against Israel! We might wish that David was

really operating as a "double agent," and he planned to turn on the Philistines in the midst of battle.

But the text gives us *no reason* for such an optimistic perspective. David has come to a very low place!

c. Remember the *roots* of David's condition: this was a genuine crisis of faith, when he started trusting more in what he *said in his heart* (1Sa.

27:1) than in what the LORD God said to him.

David believed the lie that he was safer with the world than he was with God.

i. To some degree, most every Christian has been where David is at in this back sliding state. We can *understand* what David is doing; but it is still wrong, and very dangerous.

d. Is this the man after God's own heart? Yes.

Being a man or a woman after God's own heart doesn't mean that you never sin. It means that when you do sin, you come to see it and move

on. The Bible is honest enough to show us that even its heroes did not go just from one level of glory to the next. But this account of David was given for our instruction, so that we might *avoid* some of the traps he fell into.

i. "I undertake no defence of this conduct of David; it is all bad, all defenceless; God

vindicates him not . . . it is false to say that, because these things are *recorded*, therefore they are *approved*." (Clarke

<Clarke.htm>) ii. "But it pleased God to leave David to himself in this, as well as in other particulars, that those might be sensible

demonstrations of the infirmities of the best men; and of the necessity of God's grace,

and daily direction and assistance; and of the freeness and riches of God's mercy, in passing by such great offences. (Poole

<biblio.htm>)

iii. Wonderfully, God did not bless David where he was at. But neither did God take away David's calling or destiny to be the next king of Israel. God gave to David some of the mercy David showed to Saul.

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**2** So David left and crossed over to King Achish son of Maach of Gath accompanied by his six hundred men. **3**

David settled with Achish in Gath, along with his men and their families. David had with him his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the Carmelite, Nabal's widow. **4**

When Saul learned that David had fled to Gath, he did not mount a new search for him. **5** David said to Achish, "If I have found favor with you, let me be given a place in one of the country towns so that I can live there. Why should your servant settle in the royal city with you?" **6** So Achish gave him Ziklag on that day. (For that reason Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah until this very day.) **7** The length of time that David lived in the Philistine countryside was a year and four months.

**8** Then David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. (They had been living in that land for a long time, from the approach to Shur as far as the land of Egypt.) **9** When David would attack a district, he would leave neither man nor woman alive. He would take sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and clothing and would then go back to Achish. **10** When Achish would ask, "Where did you raid today?" David would say, "The Negev of Judah" or "The Negev of Jeharmeel" or "The Negev of the Kenites." **11** Neither man nor woman would David leave alive so as to bring them back to Gath. He was thinking, "This way they can't tell on us, saying, 'This is what David did.'" Such was his practice the entire time that he lived in the country of the Philistines. **12** So Achish trusted David, thinking to himself, "He is really hated among

his own people in Israel! From now on he will be my servant.”

**1** In those days the Philistines gathered their troops for war in order to fight Israel. Achish said to David, “You should fully understand that you and your men must go with me into the battle.”

Guzik - 1 Samuel 28:1-25

### **1 Samuel 28 - Saul and the Medium of Endor**

*The first two verses of 1 Samuel 28 connect with the previous chapter, so they are examined in the commentary on 1 Samuel 27.*

A. Saul's distressing situation

1. (3-5) Saul's fear at the attack from the Philistines.

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land. Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

a. **Samuel had died:** Samuel's death was originally reported in 1Sa. 25:1. Here, the fact is mentioned again to emphasize the spiritual vacuum left by Samuel's departure.

b. **Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land:** To his credit, Saul obeyed the commands in the Mosaic Law to cast out those who practiced occultic arts. God commanded that **mediums** and **spiritists** (those who either can or claim to contact the dead and spirit beings) have no place among His people in passages such as Lev. 19:31, 20:6, 27 and in Deu. 18:9-14. Saul did this in his earlier days, when he was still influenced by Samuel's leadership.

i. Things such as tarot cards, palm readers, horoscopes and Ouija Boards are modern

attempts to practice forms of spiritism. They are dangerous links to the demonic, even if undertaken in a spirit of fun. Christians should have nothing to do with occultic arts or practices.

**c. Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem:** The

geography of **Shunem** means that the Philistines made an aggressive attack against Saul and Israel.

i. " *Shunem*, in the Valley of Jezreel, was about twenty miles north of Aphek, the most northerly Philistine city. The fact that the Philistines had penetrated thus far gives an indication of their dominance over Saul's kingdom, and of their intention to press further east to the Jordan." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

**d. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart**

**trembled greatly:** Long before his downward spiral, when Saul still walked in the Spirit, he was a man of great courage (as in 1Sa. 11:6-11). Saul began to lose his courage when the Holy Spirit withdrew from him (1Sa. 16:14), and now, after the death of Samuel (the only man to have much spiritual influence on Saul) his courage seems almost completely gone.

2. (6) God will not speak to Saul.

And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

**a. When Saul inquired of the LORD, the**

**LORD did not answer him:** Saul is in a terrible place. The Philistines threaten Israel, Saul's courage has failed him, and now God is silent when Saul seeks Him.

Saul hoped that God would speak to him through **dreams**, but God was silent. He hoped God would speak to him through the **Urim**, but God was silent. He wanted to hear from God through the **prophets**, but God would not talk to Saul.

b. Why is God silent towards Saul? Won't God answer everyone who seeks Him? Not always; not when a man is in a place of judgment as Saul is. King Saul *has* rejected and *is currently rejecting* God's previously revealed will. Since Saul doesn't care to obey God in what he already knows, God will not give him more to know.

i. At the very least, Saul knew that God did not want him hunting David and hoping to kill him. Saul said as much in passages such as 1Sa. 24:16-20 and 26:21. Yet, Saul disregarded what he knew to be God's will in this matter. If we want God to guide us, we must follow what guidance we do have from Him.

c. When we reject the word of the LORD, we can still be comforted by the fact that He is speaking to us. As we continue to reject His word, He will stop speaking to us - and we will lose even that comfort.

B. Saul consults a spirit medium.

1. (7-8) Saul seeks out a medium.

Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, *there is* a woman who is a medium at En Dor." So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you."

a. **Find me a woman who is a medium,**

**that I may go to her and inquire of her:** It wasn't easy to find a **medium** in the land of Israel, because Saul had previously put them out of the land. So Saul asks his staff to find him one, and they suggest a woman in the city of **Endor**.

i. Traditionally, this woman is known as *the Witch of Endor*. It may be appropriate to call her a witch, but it is more accurate to call her a **medium** or a *necromancer* - one who makes contact with the dead. The Hebrew word for **medium** is *owb*, and it has the idea of "mumbling" or speaking with a strange, hollow sound - as if one were "channeling," with a dead person speaking through them. The Hebrew word has in mind the *sound* the channel makes as they speak. The English word **medium** has in mind the *concept* of a channel - they stand in-between the world of the living and the dead, and communicate between the two worlds.

ii. Saul recognized that a **medium** would likely be a **woman**. It is a persistent fact that women are more drawn to such occultic arts than men are. If we were to ask the Apostle Paul why this is the case, he would reply as he did in 1Ti. 2:14 - that *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression*. This means that although men are culpable for the fall (Adam was not deceived, but sinned knowing exactly what he did), women are not to be given place of doctrinal or teaching authority in the church, because as daughters of Eve they are more susceptible to deception themselves.

iii. " *Seek me a woman*, rather than *a man*; for he thought that sex most likely to be given to those wicked arts, as



being the weaker sex, and so aptest to be deceived, and most prone to superstition." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

iv. Poole, writing about the servants of Saul who helped him find this medium: "Instead of dissuading him from this wicked and

destructive practice, which they should and would have done, if they had either loved God or their king, they further him in it."

v. " *Endor* was only a short distance away, on the north of the Hill of Moreh, and accessible despite the Philistine forces close by." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>) Endor was

"located four miles northeast of Shunem and thus dangerously close to where the Philistines were encamped." (Youngblood <ebc.htm>)

b. **Saul disguised himself . . . and he went:** as Saul seeks the medium, he brings upon himself a curse. God said in Lev. 20:6: *And the person who turns after mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.*

c. **Bring up the one I shall name for you:** Saul will ask the medium to channel the deceased prophet Samuel. He does this because he wants to know what God might say to him!

Saul is like a man going to a palm reader to hear the will of God.

i. This shows the depth of Saul's fall from God, and how it has affected his mind. He obviously isn't thinking clearly here. Once Saul rejected the truth, he was likely to fall for even the most foolish deception.

2. (9-10) Saul answers the suspicions of the medium.

Then the woman said to him, "Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

a. **Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?** The medium wondered if this was a government "sting" operation; but Saul assures her - swearing in the name of the LORD, no less - that she won't be punished.

b. **Saul swore to her by the LORD:** Saul's oath in the name of the LORD reminds us that spiritual jargon means nothing. As certainly as **the LORD lives**, Saul was in complete disobedience and darkness! This is the last time Saul uses the name of the LORD. He uses it to swear to a medium that she will not be punished!

3. (11-14) To the medium's surprise, Samuel appears.

Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you *are* Saul!" And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid.

What did you see?" And the woman said to Saul,

"I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth." So he said to her, "What *is* his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he *is* covered with a mantle." And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground and bowed down.

a. **Bring up Samuel for me:** Why did Saul want to see Samuel? Considering the times

Samuel strongly rebuked Saul (such as in 1Sa.

15:22-29), we might think that Samuel was the last person Saul would want to see. Probably, Saul wanted to remember his "good old days"

with Samuel, when the prophet was his guide and mentor (1Sa. 9:25-26).

i. In the midst of his sin, depression and demonic influence, Saul forgot that Samuel was in fact his adversary when he slipped into sin (1Sa. 13:13-14 and 15:22-29).

b. **When the woman saw Samuel, she cried**

**out with a loud voice:** Why the medium so shocked? Probably she was a fraud, and most of her dealings with the spirit realm were mere tricks. Now, Samuel *really* appears from the world beyond, and she is completely surprised to have a *real* encounter with the spirit realm.

i. In addition, we can say that this medium was familiar with the presence of demonic spirits, the presence of the Holy Spirit was probably completely unfamiliar to her. The holy presence of the Holy Spirit may have seemed terrifying to her. "The indications are that this was an extraordinary event for

her, and a frightening one because she was not in control." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

c. **Why have you deceived me? For you are**

**Saul!** The medium is also surprised, because now she knows that she is practicing her craft before the same king who drove out all the mediums and spiritists from Israel. She has reason to be afraid, both of the real spiritual presence she sees, and the king right beside her.

i. How did the medium know that the man was King Saul? We simply are not told how she knew this. It might have been something that Samuel said when he first appeared. It might have been a word of supernatural knowledge, communicated to her either from God or from the world of the demonic.

d. **And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth."** The Hebrew word translated **spirit** in the New King James Version is actually the Hebrew word *elohim* - literally, "gods," but often applied to the One God in plural form, to both reflect the truth of the Trinity and God's greatness, which is indicated in the Hebrew by the plural form.

When the medium says she saw an *elohim*, does she mean that she saw the One True God?

Does she mean that Samuel is deified? No; speaking from her own pagan context, she calls this appearing of Samuel an *elohim* because that was what it seemed to be in her pagan vocabulary. It is only *she* who calls Samuel an *elohim*.

i. "It seems that in ancient times the deceased could be referred to as 'gods' in that they lived in the realm of the preternatural." (Youngblood <ebc.htm>) ii. The medium and Saul encounter what the medium calls an *elohim* - "gods." But Saul will say, " *God [elohim] has departed from me*" (1Sa. 28:15). Saul had no trouble understanding that even though the medium referred to Samuel as an *elohim* because of her occultic background, this appearance of Samuel was not the real God of heaven. He makes the distinction in his wording.

iii. "She useth the plural number, *gods*, either after the manner of the Hebrew language, which commonly useth that word of one person; or after the language and custom of the heathens." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

iv. Saul came " *Ascending out of the earth*, as though it came from the place of the dead." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

e. **Saul perceived that it was Samuel:**

However Samuel appeared, he was visible to both the medium *and* Saul. This wasn't a "crystal ball" appearance that only the medium could pretend to see. Nor was it a "voice in the dark" that one might encounter in a séance.

This was a real appearance of Samuel.

f. What is going on here? This strange incident is controversial, and several different approaches have been used to understand this passage. Here are four of the most commonly suggested possibilities.

i. Some believe that *this was a hallucination of the medium*. But this doesn't make sense, because it doesn't explain why the medium was so frightened. It doesn't explain why Saul saw Samuel also, and why Samuel spoke to Saul, not to the medium.

ii. Some believe that *this was a deception by the medium*. But this also isn't an adequate explanation, for the same reasons given to the previous suggestion.

iii. Some believe that *this was a demonic impersonation of Samuel*. It is possible that the medium, with her occultic powers, summoned a demonic spirit that deceived both her and Saul. But this suggestion is also inadequate, because it does not speak to the issue of *motive*. After all, what advantage does Satan gain by "Samuel's" words to Saul?

iv. Some believe that *this was a genuine (but strange) appearance of Samuel*. This is the best explanation, because it is supported by the reaction of the medium, who got more than she bargained for. It is also supported by the *truth* of what Samuel said (and the text says that *Samuel* said it).

Some may say that it is impossible for Samuel to reappear in some way, coming from the world beyond back to this world.

But Moses and Elijah also came from the world beyond back to this world when they appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Mat. 17:3).

v. Clarke makes an additional valuable point:

"I believe that the woman of En-dor had no power over *Samuel*; and that *no incantation* can avail over any *departed saint of God*, nor indeed over any *human* disembodied spirit." Samuel really came, but not because the medium called for him. Samuel appeared because God had a special purpose for it.

g. What was God's purpose in sending such a strange appearance of Samuel? This appearance of Samuel accomplished two things: it reconfirmed the coming judgment upon King Saul's in a dramatic way, and it taught the medium a powerful lesson about the dangers of her occultic craft.

i. "I believe *Samuel did actually appear to Saul*; and that he was sent by the especial *mercy of God* to warn this infatuated king of his approaching death, that he might have an opportunity to make his peace with his Maker." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

ii. When we close our ears to God, He will find unusual - and perhaps uncomfortable - ways to speak to us. "That he did appear to Saul, there can be no question, but he did not come in response to her call. He was sent of God, for the express purpose of rebuking Saul for his unholy traffic with these evil things, and to pronounce his doom." (Morgan)

C. Samuel speaks to Saul.

1. (15-18) Samuel tells King Saul why the LORD will not speak to him.

Now Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you

disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams.

Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do." Then Samuel said:

"Why then do you ask me, seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy?

And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD

nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek,

therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

a. **Why have you disturbed me?** Samuel's words would be in the mouth of anyone who

had left the place of comfort and blessing in the world beyond to come back to the earth.

Samuel would rather be back where he was!

i. This is an indication to us of the *reality* of the world beyond. Though he passed from

this world, Samuel was in a real place, living a real existence. We need to live every day

with the understanding of the reality of

eternity, of the world beyond. Much of this

life will only make sense in light of the world to come.

ii. Properly speaking, Samuel was not in

*heaven*. Jesus explained in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luk. 16:19-31) that

before the finished work of Jesus on the

cross, the believing dead went to a place of

comfort and blessing known as *Abraham's*

*bosom*. When Jesus finished his work on the cross, the sin's penalty was paid for these

believing dead, and they were then ushered into heaven.

b. **I am deeply distressed:** Saul explains his problem to Samuel. First, **the Philistines make war against me**. But far worse than that is the fact that Saul knows that **God has departed from me and does not answer me any more**. Saul then reveals *why* he called for Samuel: **that you may reveal to me what I should do**.

i. **God has departed from me:** "God never departs from a man until the man has departed from Him. Then, in the interests of righteousness, God is against that man." (Morgan)

ii. **What I should do:** "Saul is asking for guidance when his course of action is obvious: he has to fight the Philistines. What he really wants is reassurance that all will be well and that he will win the battle." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

iii. Strangely, though Saul knew that God would not speak to him in any other way, or through any of the other prophets, he thought that somehow or some way the godly prophet Samuel, conjured by a medium, would speak wisdom to him! Even more strangely, Samuel will!

c. What does Samuel say to Saul? **Why do you ask me, seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy?**

This is a very logical question for Samuel to ask. Samuel was on the LORD's side, so if the LORD wouldn't tell Saul what he wanted, he didn't have any reason to believe that Samuel would.

i. Perhaps Saul kept seeking, hoping that the news would get better, but it never does!

d. **As He spoke by me . . . the voice of the LORD:** Essentially, Samuel confirms what God had already said to



Saul. The message of the LORD to Saul is disturbingly consistent; no matter which strange way God chooses to bring the message.

i. The test for any "spirit encounter" or "angelic revelation" is its faithfulness to the Biblical message. It doesn't matter what kind of impressive encounter one has with a spiritual being; even if *an angel from heaven* (or Samuel himself!) *preach any other gospel to you . . . let him be accursed* (Gal. 1:8).

e. **Because you did not . . . execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day:** Samuel calls Saul's mind back to the events recorded in 1 Samuel 15. In that chapter, Samuel told Saul " *The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you . . . For He is not a man, that He should relent*" (1Sa. 15:28-29). Apparently, in the fifteen or so years since the events of 1

Samuel 15, Saul thought that perhaps the LORD had changed His mind! Samuel came to tell Saul that the LORD had not changed His mind at all.

i. Samuel makes this point exactly when he quotes from the 1Sa. 15:28-29 passage with these words: **For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.** God's word to Saul didn't change at all from the time He first said it until the time it would be fulfilled.

Perhaps Saul thought that *time* would change God's mind; but *time* never changes God's mind. Our *repentance* and *genuine brokenness* may change God's mind, but never time.

ii. When the medium saw Samuel, she said

he was *covered with a mantle*. The *mantle* was probably Samuel's robe, which would have identified him as both a prophet and a priest. In 1Sa. 15:27, when Samuel announced that God would take the kingdom away from Saul, Saul grabbed Samuel's robe in desperation. The Hebrew word used for *robe* in 1Sa. 15:27 ( *meheel*) is the same word used for *mantle* in 1Sa. 28:14. It is likely that when Samuel appeared before the medium and Saul, he wore in this same torn robe to remind Saul that **the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.**

2. (19) Samuel tells Saul about his fate.

"Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And

tomorrow you and your sons *will be* with me.

The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

a. **Tomorrow you and your sons will be**

**with me:** Saul learns from Samuel that he will die the next day. In 1Sa. 28:16, Saul asked to know *what I should do*. Samuel never told him what to do, because it was too late to do anything. All Samuel told him was what would happen, and God's judgment was already in motion.

i. Before this time, Saul had plenty of time to repent; but now time has run out. We can

never assume that we will have as much time as we want to repent. The desire to repent, and the opportunity to repent are gifts from God. If we have the desire and the opportunity today, we must seize upon it, because it may not be there tomorrow.

ii. When Samuel said **you and your sons**

**will be with me**, did it mean that Saul was going to heaven, that he would be with the believing dead? Not necessarily. In the story Jesus told in Luk. 16:19-31, the blessed dead and the cursed dead were both in the same general area. The believing dead were in the place of comfort known as the *Abraham's bosom*, but the cursed dead were in a place of torment. So, Saul would be in the same *general* area as Samuel, but not the same *specific place*.

**b. The LORD will deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines . . . you and your sons:** When judgment fell upon Saul, it would also trouble the people around him. His sons and all Israel would also suffer also.

i. "Can any person read this, properly considering the situation of this unfortunate monarch, the triumph of the enemies of God, and the speedy ruin in which the godlike Jonathan is about to be involved, without feeling the keenest anguish of heart?" (Clarke <Clarke.htm>)

D. Saul's reaction and departure.

1. (20) Saul reacts with fear and a loss of all strength.

Then immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night.

**a. Because of the words of Samuel:** It wasn't just that Samuel told Saul that he would die, or fall in battle before the Philistines. Far worse to Saul was the knowledge that the LORD was his adversary; that not only were the Philistines set against him, but so was the LORD God. Knowing this is more than Saul can bear.

2. (21-25) The medium comforts Saul.

And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was severely troubled, and said to him, "Look, your maidservant has obeyed your voice, and I have put my life in my hands and heeded the words which you spoke to me. Now therefore,

please, heed also the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength when you go on *your way*." But he refused and said, "I will not eat." So his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he heeded their voice. Then he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it. And she took flour and kneaded *it*, and baked unleavened bread from it.

So she brought *it* before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

**a. The woman came to Saul and saw that**

**he was severely troubled:** It's a sad note when a practitioner of the occult is comforting the King of Israel. But they were two of the same kind; each lived in rebellion to God, and each was under judgment from the LORD.

**b. And they ate:** The dinner Saul ate that night was like the last meal of a man on death row, waiting execution in the morning.

**c. Then he rose and went away that night:** Saul leaves this strange encounter resigned to his fate. Even if he didn't learn his lessons from this, we can hear what the LORD would say in this chapter.

i. To hear from the LORD, we should begin by obeying what we already know He has told us in His word.

ii. We should reject any connection with the occult or spiritists.

iii. When we close our ears to God, He will find unusual - and perhaps uncomfortable - ways to speak to us.

iv. We must understand - and appreciate - the reality of the world beyond this present world.

v. The test of any spiritual experience or revelation is how it measures against God's Word.

vi. God's Word stays the same. Time does not make Him change His mind.

d. "The additional information, that within twenty-four hours he and his sons would be dead, was no help at all to his morale. Indeed he would have been better without it. He did

himself no good by doing what he had decreed to be unlawful. God's word stood and could not be altered. He should have believed it instead of thinking that by further consultation he could reverse its judgment. The Lord did not answer him, because there was no more to be said." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

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**2** David replied to Achish, "That being the case, you will come to know what your servant can do!" Achish said to David, "Then I will make you my bodyguard from now on."

**3** Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented over him and had buried him in Ramah, his hometown. In the meantime Saul had removed the mediums and magicians from the land. **4** The Philistines assembled; they came and camped at Shunem. Saul mustered all Israel and camped at Gilboa. **5** When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was absolutely terrified. **6** So Saul inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him - not by dreams nor by Urim nor by the prophets. **7** So Saul instructed his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." His servants replied to him, "There is a woman who is a medium in Endor."

**8** So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothing and left, accompanied by two of his men. They came to the woman at night and said, "Use your ritual pit to conjure up for me the one I tell you."

**9** But the woman said to him, "Look, you are aware of what Saul has done; he has removed the mediums and magicians from the land! Why are you trapping me so you can put me to death?" **10** But Saul swore an oath to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not incur guilt in this matter!" **11** The woman replied, "Who is it that I should bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up for me Samuel."

**12** When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out loudly.

The woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me?

You are Saul!" **13** The king said to her, "Don't be afraid!

What have you seen?" The woman replied to Saul, "I have seen one like a god coming up from the ground!" **14** He said to her, "What about his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up! He is wrapped in a robe!"

Then Saul realized it was Samuel, and he bowed his face toward the ground and kneeled down. **15** Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"

Saul replied, "I am terribly troubled! The Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me. He does not answer me – not by the prophets nor by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what I should do."

**16** Samuel said, "Why are you asking me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy? **17** The LORD has done exactly as I prophesied!

The LORD has torn the kingdom from your hand and has given it to your neighbor David! **18** Since you did not obey the LORD and did not carry out his fierce anger against the

Amalekites, the LORD has done this thing to you today. **19**

The LORD will hand you and Israel over to the Philistines! Tomorrow both you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand the army of Israel over to the Philistines!"

**20** Saul quickly fell full length on the ground and was very afraid because of Samuel's words. He was completely drained of energy, not having eaten anything all that day and night. **21** When the woman came to Saul and saw how terrified he was, she said to him, "Your servant has done what you asked. I took my life into my own hands and did what you told me. **22** Now it's your turn to listen to your servant! Let me set before you a bit of bread so that you can eat. When you regain your strength, you can go on your way."

**23** But he refused, saying, "I won't eat!" Both his servants and the woman urged him to eat, so he gave in.

He got up from the ground and sat down on the bed. **24**

Now the woman had a well-fed calf at her home that she quickly slaughtered. Taking some flour, she kneaded bread and baked it without leaven. **25** She brought it to Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and left that same night.

**1** The Philistines assembled all their troops at Aphek, while Israel camped at the spring that is in Jezreel.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 29:1-11

### ***1 Samuel 29 - The Philistines Reject David***

A. The Philistine rulers object to David's presence among the Philistine army.

1. (1-3) Achish defends David in the face of accusations from the other leaders Philistines.

Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by a fountain which *is* in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish. Then the princes of the Philistines said, "What *are* these Hebrews *doing here*?" And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, " *Is* this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected *to me*."

**a. Then the Philistines gathered together**

**all their armies:** The battle lines were drawn in the previous chapter, when the Philistines made a deep incursion into Israelite territory.

The Philistines were intent on delivering a death-blow to Israel, and the two armies square off in anticipation of battle.

i. Where is Saul? The night before, Saul sought the help of a spirit medium, wanting to hear from God. Through a strange appearance of the prophet Samuel, God told Saul he would die the next day in battle. Instead of humbling himself in repentance before the LORD, Saul simply resigned himself to this fate.

**b. The lords of the Philistines passed in review . . . David and his men passed in review at the rear:**

What is David doing among the Philistines? David, in the midst of great discouragement, left the people of God and the land of Israel, and cast his lot with the Philistines instead (1 Samuel 27).

i. David now finds himself in a place he thought he would never be: among the ungodly, ready to *fight against* God's people! When we sin, when we backslide, when we turn away from the things of God, we may soon find ourselves in a place we *never* thought we would be.

**c. What are these Hebrews doing here:**

Leaders among the Philistines looked at David and his men, and said, "They aren't one of us.

They are Hebrews. They worship another God.

They live in the land God promised to them. We don't belong together!"

i. The Philistine leaders *could see what*



*David was blinded to.* David had started to think and act like a Philistine, and was ready to fight with them against the people of God.

But the Philistine leaders could see that this wasn't right, even when David couldn't!

ii. The Philistine leaders *knew who David really was* - that is, a Hebrew, a part of God's people. David seems to have forgotten this, but the Philistine leaders knew. David would have never slipped into this sinful place if he had remembered who he really was, and what His destiny was. This is a sad example of a time when we wish David had the wisdom of the Philistines!

iii. "It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, 'What do these Hebrews here?'" (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

**d. Is this not David . . . who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me:** It is a sad thing that a Philistine ruler will defend David so confidently!

David has identified himself so much with the ungodly, that Achish *knows* he has David in his pocket.

i. Hearing these words from Achish *should* have grieved David. To hear an ungodly ruler say, "David has been with me" and "I have found no fault in him" and "he defected to me" should have been a great wake-up

call to David. It would be as if an ungodly coworker insisted to others that you really weren't a Christian after all, because they had seen how you live! God was speaking to David through this, but was David listening?

ii. It is also important to see that Achish

wasn't just making this up. David had said as much in 1Sa. 28:1-2 and Achish had every reason to believe that David would fight on his side.

2. (4-5) The Philistine leaders reject David.

But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him; so the princes of the Philistines said to him,

"Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, if not with the heads of these men? *Is this not David*, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying: 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?"

a. **But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him:** The other Philistine leaders were not in agreement with Achish at all. They didn't trust David, and they feared he would turn against the Philistines in battle, to bring himself back into Saul's favor.

b. **Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying:** The faith-filled victory over Goliath seemed like a distant, distant memory for a backslidden David, but the Philistines remembered it well! The song of David's victory has come back to haunt him again.

B. David heads back to Ziklag.

1. (6-7) Achish tells David to go home.

Then Achish called David and said to him,

"Surely, *as the LORD lives*, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army *is* good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you. Therefore return now, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines."

a. "*As the Lord lives* is unexpected in a Philistine oath; can it be that Achish has committed

himself to David's Lord, or is he being courteous to David in not swearing by Philistine gods? The latter is perhaps more likely." (Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

**b. Nevertheless, the lords do not favor**

**you:** David thought he couldn't be happy or at peace in the land of Israel ( *Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines*, 1Sa. 27:1). Now he finds that his "Philistine friends" won't accept him either. David has no home; he is trying to live in both worlds, so he has a home in neither world.

i. No doubt, David didn't *like* being rejected by the Philistine rulers. Not many people like rejection. But God would *use* the rejection of ungodly people in David's life. Many people are hesitant to live out-and-out for Jesus

Christ because they are afraid of the

rejection of the ungodly. How much better it

is to be all out for Jesus, and to trust that if the ungodly reject us, God will use it for

good - for our good and for theirs.

c. In many ways, David is in the worst place for any child of God. He has too much of the world in him to be at peace in the LORD, and he has too much of the LORD in him to be at peace in the world. God is speaking to David through this, but is David listening?

**d. That you may not displease the lords of the Philistines:** David used to **displease the lords of the Philistines** all right; he used to be a mighty warrior for the cause of God, and he used to strike fear in the heart of every enemy of God. Now, David is concerned about displeasing **the lords of the Philistines!**

i. Is this the same David who fought Goliath?

Could you imagine someone coming to

David before that battle, and saying,

"Excuse me David, I don't think you should do that. You might **displease the lords of**

**the Philistines.**" What do you think David's response would be? He might say, "Of *course* I will **displease the lords of the Philistines!** I *want to* **displease the lords of the Philistines!** I can't wait to **displease the lords of the Philistines!**

Let me know if I ever stop displeasing **the lords of the Philistines!**" But all of that is a distant, distant memory, in this time of backsliding and compromise for David.

2. (8-10) David appeals to Achish.

So David said to Achish, "But what have I done?

And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" Then Achish answered and said to David, "I know that you *are* as good in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' Now therefore, rise early in the morning with your master's servants who have come with you. And as soon as you are up early in the morning and have light, depart."

a. **But what have I done?** David seems genuinely disappointed that he will not be able to fight for the Philistines against Israel.

b. **He shall not go up with us to the battle .**

**. . as soon as you are up early in the morning and have light, depart:** David wanted to fight with the Philistines against Israel, but *God* wouldn't let him. David's heart is in a bad place, but God hasn't abandoned him!

We should praise God for the times when He kept us from sinning as bad as we wanted to sin!

3. (11) David returns to Ziklag and the Philistines army prepares to meet Saul.

So David and his men rose early to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines.

And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

a. **To return to the land of the Philistines:** The Holy Spirit makes it clear. All of this that happened in this chapter should have waked David up. He should have heard God speaking

in many ways, but he didn't. Instead, he made his **return to the land of the Philistines.**

What will it take to bring David around?

Because God loves David, He will do what it takes.

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**2** When the leaders of the Philistines were passing in review at the head of their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were passing in review in the rear with Achish.

**3** The leaders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?" Achish said to the leaders of the Philistines, "Isn't this David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me for quite some time? I have found no fault with him from the day of his defection until the present time!"

**4** But the leaders of the Philistines became angry with him and said to him, "Send the man back! Let him return to the place that you assigned him! Don't let him go down with us into the battle, for he might become our adversary in the battle. What better way to please his lord than with the heads of these men? **5** Isn't this David, of whom they sang as they danced, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, but David his tens of thousands'?"

**6** So Achish summoned David and said to him, "As surely as the LORD lives, you are an honest man, and I am glad to have you serving with me in the army. I have found no fault with you from the day that you first came to me until the present time. But in the opinion of the leaders, you are not reliable. **7** So turn and leave in peace. You must not do anything that the leaders of the Philistines consider improper!"

**8** But David said to Achish, "What have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day that I first came into your presence until the present time, that I shouldn't go and fight the enemies of my lord the king?" **9**

Achish replied to David, "I am convinced that you are as reliable as the angel of God! However, the leaders of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us in the battle.' **10** So get up early in the morning along with the servants of your lord who have come with you. When you get up early in the morning, as soon as it is light enough to see, leave."

**11** So David and his men got up early in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines, but the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

**1** On the third day David and his men came to Ziklag. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They attacked Ziklag and burned it.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 30:1-31

### ***1 Samuel 30 - David in Victory Again***

A. David's distress.

1. (1-2) Ziklag is plundered by the Amalekites.

Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked

Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who *were* there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried *them* away and went their way.

a. **Now it happened:** It certainly **happened**, but it didn't happen by accident. God had a purpose for all of this in David's life.

b. " *On the third day* indicates that David and his men covered about twenty-five miles a day on the march south from Aphek to Ziklag, where they would have arrived tired, hungry and expecting all the comforts for a welcome home."

(Baldwin <Baldwin.htm>)

**c. The Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it**

**to the ground:** While David and his men were to the north trying to join the Philistine army, their own city of Ziklag was unguarded. The opportunistic Amalekites took advantage of the defenseless city, **attacked** it, and **burned it to the ground**.

d. Worse than that, they **had taken captive the women and those who were there,**

**from small to great.** Not only was the city burned, but all their women and children were taken away.

i. There is a touch of the LORD's poetic justice in all this. David had brought this exact calamity on other cities. 1Sa. 27:8-11 says during his time among the Philistines, David made his living as a bandit, robbing cities and *whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive*. The Amalekites were being more merciful than David had been!

ii. God, who is great in mercy, does not discipline us as much as we deserve. Like a compassionate father, He tempers the stroke of His hand with kindness and love.

2. (3-6) David and his men come upon the empty, burned city.

So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who *were* with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been

taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his

daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

a. **So David and his men came to the city:** As they came within a few miles of their city, the hearts of David and his men must have brightened. They were discouraged that they

hadn't been allowed to fight with the Philistines; they are soldiers, and soldiers want to fight! But at least they knew they were coming home, and home meant all their familiar surroundings, and all their families. But that bright thought quickly turned black as night.

b. **And there it was, burned with fire:** Even off in the distance they could see something

was wrong. Smoke rose from their city, but it wasn't the smoke of cooking fires. It was too much smoke for that, and the smoke was too black. They wondered why no one had come to

greet them afar off - where were their wives and children? Weren't they glad to see them?

But when they came to the city and saw it was a ghost town, a pile of burned rubble, with no voice of the survivors, it seemed that everything was lost.

i. "May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag, and all your carnal hopes carried away captive, and may you then

encourage yourselves in Christ, for he will recover all for you, and give you spoil besides, and there shall be joy and

rejoicing." (Spurgeon <[Spurgeon.htm](#)>) c. **Then David and the people who were**

**with him lifted up their voices and wept,**

**until they had no more power to weep:** All had been lost. At this point, David has nothing more to support him. No one in Israel can help him. The Philistines don't want him. His family is gone; all he has owned is gone. But at least he has his friends, right? Not really; **the people**



**spoke of stoning him.** Every support is gone, except the LORD. That is a *good* place to be in, not a bad place.

i. David did not weep only because everything and everyone was lost. He also wept because he knew that he was responsible for it. No wonder **David was greatly distressed**. He is about as low in his backslidden state as a man can be; David is like the prodigal son who now sits in the pigpen.

d. **But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God:** It took a lot to bring David to this place, but now he is here - God is his only strength.

i. **David** strengthened himself in the LORD his God. This was backslidden David, wayward David, "fight with the Philistines" David. Why would God strengthen him? Because God is rich in mercy and grace, and because David was now completely broken, ready to be filled. Sometimes we think we have to *achieve* God's blessing or strength, but David shows us another way.

ii. David **strengthened** himself in the LORD his God. He received the strength, and felt it flow through himself, and was bold enough to ask for it and receive it from God. Before this, he didn't see himself as weak, but after coming home to a burned-out ghost town, David knew he was weak and needed God's strength.

iii. David strengthened **himself** in the LORD his God. He didn't wait for someone else to strengthen him. He didn't say, "Well LORD, if You want to strengthen me, that's fine. I'll just wait here until You do it." David knew that the LORD's strength was there for those who wait upon Him, so he strengthened

**himself** in the LORD his God. God's strength was there for David all the time, but now he takes it for himself and will strengthen himself in the LORD his God.

iv. David strengthened himself **in the LORD**

**his God**. This wasn't some kind of rah-rah cheerleader kind of positive thinking mumbo

jumbo. This was the strength of the living God making itself real in the life and heart of a hurting man. This was strength for

recognition, strength for brokenness, strength for repentance, strength for determination to win back what the enemy has stolen. This is the same strength that would raise Jesus from the dead!

e. *How* did David strengthen himself in the LORD?

i. David would have strengthened himself remembering *God's love*. At this point of total loss, David now saw the love of the

LORD in the rejection of the Philistine leaders. If they had not sent him away, he and his men would not have returned right now, when the Amalekites had just left and the fires of their destruction were still burning. If God had not sent him back home through the rejection of the Philistines, it would have been months and months until he returned, and the situation would have been far worse. That which stung him before became sweet to him now, and the most precious expression of the LORD's love.

ii. David would have strengthened himself remembering *God's promise and calling*. He could shake his head, clear the fog that had set about it for the last year or so, and say "I am a man anointed by God, called by

God, and promised by God to be the next king of Israel. I have a high calling and promise from God, and He hasn't taken it away. I need to start living according to that destiny." David could thank God and see the glory of His power in this high call.

iii. David would have strengthened himself remembering *God's past deliverances*. He could say, "This is a terrible spot, no doubt.

But remember all the times when the LORD delivered me out of a bad spot before? If He did it then, He will do it now. He didn't deliver me before just to let me perish now."

f. David took his only encouragement from the LORD. 1Ch. 12:19-20 gave David a reason for

encouragement - men from the tribe of Manasseh came to him at this time, and stood with him when others were turning on David.

But that isn't mentioned as encouragement to David at all. "God was beginning to cure his servant by a bitter dose of distress, and the evidence of the cure was that he did not encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

g. What David *said in his heart* in 1Sa. 27:1 got him into this whole mess; now, what he says to himself to strengthen himself in the LORD will help bring him out. "Some of the best talks in the world are those which a man has with himself. He who speaks to everybody except himself is a great fool." (Spurgeon)

B. David wins back what was lost - and more.

1. (7-8) David inquires of the LORD.

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake *them* and without fail recover *all*."

a. In 1Sa. 30:6, *David strengthened himself in the LORD his God*. Now, it was time to *do* something with that strength from the LORD.

First, David uses that strength when he

**inquired of the LORD.**

b. Of all the time David spent among the Philistines, this is the first time we read of him seeking God in any way. During his time of compromise and backsliding, David simply didn't inquire of the LORD in this way.

i. "Some other times, when he should, he called not for it; but proceeded only upon his own head. Now being in this great distress, though very desirous to pursue his enemies, and recover his wives, he would not go without the God's approbation and direction.

We are usually best when at worst." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>)

c. *How* did David inquire of the LORD? He did it the way God said to inquire of Him; David sought God with the help of the priest, almost certainly using the Urim and Thummim that were part of the priest's **ephod**. An **ephod** was a special apron that priests would wear, to cover over their clothing, so the sacrificial blood and gore would splash on the ephod, not so

much on their clothing.

i. It is likely that this wasn't just any ephod; this was the ephod of the High Priest, which had the *breastplate of judgment* (Exo. 28:15) attached to it (Exo. 28:28). The breastplate had in it a pouch with two stones, known as *the Urim and Thummim*

(Exo. 28:30). When David **inquired of the LORD**, he probably asked Abiathar to use the *Urim and Thummim*.

ii. How did the priest use the *Urim and Thummim* to inquire of the LORD? The names *Urim and Thummim* mean "Lights and Perfections." We aren't sure what they were or how they were used. Most think they were a pair of stones, one light and another dark, and each stone indicated a "yes" or "no" from God. The idea is that High Priest would ask God a question that could be answered with a "yes" or a "no," reach into the breastplate, and pull out the stone indicating God's answer.

iii. We don't have the Urim and Thummim today; and even if they were discovered in a miracle of archaeology, God would no more bless their use today than He would bless a re-establishment of the Old Testament priesthood. The day for the Old Testament priesthood is past for us today, being perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But in David's day it was commanded of the LORD. The key to the effectiveness of the Urim and Thummim was that *God's Word* gave them. In seeking God through the Urim and Thummim, David was really going back to God's Word for guidance, because it was the word of God that commanded their place and allowed their use. Today, if we have the same focus on God's Word, He will guide us also.

d. *What* did David ask the LORD? David asked, **Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?** At one time, David would not have bothered to even ask these questions. He would have simply done it, because when a soldier is

attacked, he attacks back. But in returning from his backsliding, David brings *everything* to the LORD. Nothing is done just because it was done before. He asks God about everything.

e. *What* did God answer David? **Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.** God first gave David something *to do* (**pursue**). Then, God gave David a *promise* in the doing (**you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all**). When God gives us something to *do*, He also gives us a *promise* in the doing.

2. (9-10) David pursues the Amalekites who conquered Ziklag.

So David went, he and the six hundred men who *were* with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for

two hundred stayed *behind*, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor.

a. **So David went:** God told David to go and pursue them, and David did exactly that.

Obedience to the LORD is often that simple.

i. What is the use of calling Jesus "Lord" if we will not *do* what He tells us to *do*? Is there a single thing you have *done*, or a single thing you have *not done*, for the simple reason that Jesus told you to *do it* or not *do it*?

b. **He and the six hundred men who were with him:** David's men were almost at a place of mutiny against him ( *the people spoke of stoning him*, 1Sa. 30:6). But now, since he *strengthened himself in the LORD his God* (1Sa.

30:6), and since he *inquired of the LORD* (1Sa.

30:8), and since he did what God told him to do, his men are totally back on his side.

i. When it says, **David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him**, it

implies that David said, "Men, I'm going. I have a promise from God for victory, and I'm going to believe it. It doesn't matter if you come with me or not, because God is on my side, and I have to beat all the Amalekites all by myself, God's promise will not fail." But such faith in God stirred the hearts of the **six hundred men**, and they couldn't stand by and not follow David.

ii. What a sight it must have been! David and **the six hundred men** on the march again, this time not hoping to fight for the Philistines, or for themselves, but off again on a mission from God. There wasn't an army on earth that could beat David and his six hundred men when they walked in God's will.

c. **For two hundred stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor:** This might have been tremendously discouraging to David. As he pursues a significantly larger Amalekite army, he finds that one-third of his men can't continue. But David doesn't let this trial stop him. He sets the one-third to work guarding the supplies, lightening the load of the 400 who continue, and he sets out again, full of faith.

i. "But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial . . . Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force. When God means to bless us, he often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task, and the Lord takes away a portion

even of the little power we had. Our God does not fill till he has emptied. Two hundred men must be rent away from David's side before God could give him victory . . . Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen, that you may have all the greater joy by-and-by." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

3. (11-15) David and his men befriend a helpless Egyptian. Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights. Then David said to him, "To whom do you *belong*, and where *are* you from?" And he said, "I *am* a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion of the southern *area* of the Cherethites, in the *territory* which *belongs* to Judah, and of the southern *area* of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire." And David said to him, "Can you take me down to this troop?" So he said, "Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop."

**a. Then they found an Egyptian in the**

**field:** As David and the 600 men pursue the Amalekites, they come across a man collapsed

in the wilderness. It would have been easy, and perhaps logical, to ignore this man because they had a "much greater" mission in pursuing the Amalekites. But David and his men show unexpected kindness to this man, and they

**gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water.**

i. The Egyptian was near death; **he had**



**eaten no bread nor drunk any water for three days and three nights.** It would

have been easy to ignore him, and pass him by. They could have said, "Look, this is a very sad case but this man is near death

anyway. We can't do much to save him, so

let's be on our way." They could have said,

"We are on a mission from God and nothing can get in our way, so let's be on our way."

But David and his men refused these

excuses, and showed an unexpected

kindness to this man. This shows that David

was really walking in the heart of God.

ii. The fact that this was *unexpected* care and kindness is significant. We may all pat

ourselves on the back for showing *expected* love to others, but what great praise is that?

Jesus' question in the Sermon on the Mount

rings true: *What do you do more than*

*others?* (Mat. 5:47)

**b. Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?"**

David - the leader of these 600 men, and

anointed to be the next king of Israel - didn't have to take a

caring interest in this man, but he did. David did what some

would have thought was a waste of time: he showed simple

care and kindness to a nobody. They didn't just give this

Egyptian food and water, they gave him care and kindness.

i. Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on

David's question to the Egyptian, **"To whom do you belong?"** ( *A Searching Question*). In one section, he helps

his listeners discover to whom they really belong by asking these questions: 1. Where

were you born? 2. What company do you

keep? 3. What is your dialect? 4. What have

you learned to do? 5. What do the angels

see you do?

**c. I am a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite . . . we burned Ziklag with fire:** In showing unexpected kindness to this Egyptian, God shows David unexpected blessing. Since he knew where they came from, he knew where they would return, and he promised to guide David and his men there.

i. "The emphatic 'we' at the beginning of v.

14 suggests that the slave participated personally in the Amalekites'

raids." (Youngblood <ebc.htm>)

**d. The southern area of the Cherethites:**

" *Ketrthi*, which, without the points, might be read *Creti*, were not only at this time *Philistines*, but that they were aborigines of *Crete*, from which they had their name *Cherethites* or *Cretans*, and are those of whom Zephaniah speaks, chapter 2:5: *Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: 'I will destroy you; So there shall be no inhabitant.'* And Ezekiel, chapter 25:16: *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast.'* In 2Sa.

15:18 we find that the *Cherethites* formed a part of David's guards." (Clarke <Clarke.htm>) 4. (16-20) David routs and spoils the Amalekites, winning back everything that was taken.

And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who

rode on camels and fled. So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all. Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those *other* livestock, and said, "This *is* David's spoil."

a. Catching the Amalekites in the midst of their victory celebration, David and his men

**attacked them from twilight until the**

**evening of the next day.** How surprised the Amalekites must have been! They figured that

all the Philistine and Israelite armies were far to the north, preparing to fight each other. They weren't expecting this army that was neither Philistine, nor among the Israelite army.

i. **Twilight** is probably a bad translation here, and it should be *from dawn until*

*evening of the next day.* "The Hebrew word *nesep*, translated 'dawn' in Job. 7:4 and Psa.

119:147, has this sense here . . . Having

noted the situation, David and his men took

some rest and attacked at first light, when

the Amalekites would be suffering from the

soporific effects of the feast, and least able to defend themselves." (Baldwin <Baldwin.

htm>)

ii. It was wise to attack the Amalekites when they were hung over from the party the

night before. "Whom they found it no hard matter to stab with the sword, who were

cup-shot before." (Trapp <Trapp.htm>) b. **David recovered**

**all that the Amalekites had carried away:** Everything that the enemy had taken, David took back. God gave him a complete victory, because David *strengthened himself in the LORD his God* (1Sa. 30:6), David *inquired of the LORD* (1Sa.

30:8), David did what God told him to do, and David showed unexpected care and kindness to others.

i. God's promise was proved true. When David inquired of the LORD, God promised

*You shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all* (1Sa. 30:8). The promise was fulfilled exactly, but it wasn't fulfilled as David sat back passively and said, "All right God, now You can do it." The LORD fulfilled His promise, but He used David's actions to fulfill the promise. God's promise didn't

*exclude* David's cooperation, the promise *invited* his cooperation.

ii. "Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads; but angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves, and it is a way which does us double good.

It was more for David's benefit that he should himself smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of heaven upon them, and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wage of battle, and be rewarded for the forced march and

the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labor to extricate yourself from debt and

difficulty, and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites, and then to march after them, as if it all depended upon

yourself." (Spurgeon <[Spurgeon.htm](#)>) iii. "How truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious

Captain has recovered. What then shall be

his spoil? It was foretold that 'He shall divide the spoil with the strong.' Let your hearts

and mine, and all we are, and all we have,  
be yielded up to him, and let us say of it all,  
'This is Jesu's spoil, and to him be glory  
evermore!'" (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>) c. **This is David's spoil:** God gave David *even more* than what was promised. He received **spoil** from the battle, beyond what had been taken from Ziklag. This was blessing straight from the grace of God.

i. "Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf, He has not only given us back what we lost, but He has given us what Adam in his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that, because this part of it is peculiarly our Lord's spoil. Those good things which we now possess, over and above what we lost by sin, come to us by the Lord Jesus. Now that the Son of God has come into the field, He is not content with restoration, He turns the loss into a gain, the fall into a greater rising." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

ii. We should come to Jesus, and by our free will give Him everything we have, everything we are. We give our lives to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our gifts and abilities to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our possessions to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our praise to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil." We give our time to Him and say, "This is Jesus' spoil."

iii. Some wonder why David was allowed to keep the spoil of the Amalekites when Saul was expressly commanded to not keep any spoil from that nation (1Sa. 15:1-3), and was judged by God for not obeying that command (1Sa. 15:13-23). The answers are

simple: First, David had no specific command from God to destroy all the spoil from the Amalekites, as Saul did. Second, David was *recovering* what the Amalekites had taken from *others*, though he recovered far beyond what was taken from his city.

Third, David was not acting as the king of Israel, representing the LORD's nation, as Saul was. So in this case, simply put, the rules were different for David.

C. The spoil from the battle is divided.

1. (21-25) The spoils are distributed equally among those who fought and those who supported.

Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who *were* with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David answered and said,

"Because they did not go with us, we will not give them *any* of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead *them* away and depart." But David said, "My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter?

But as his part *is* who goes down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike." So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.

**a. Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary they could**

**not follow David:** Apparently, when David was in swift pursuit of the Amalekites, 200 men among his company could not continue on. So

they made a camp where they were, and lightened the supply load from the soldiers who would continue. Now, David returns to the **two hundred men** who stayed by the supply camp.

**b. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David answered**

**and said:** When David returned, these men of the supply camp saw their own possessions among the spoils of battle, and they wanted them back. The **wicked and worthless men** (apparently, there were some among David's men) protested, and said they could only have back **every man's wife and children**, but none of their possessions.

**c. My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us . . . But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies, they shall share alike.** David declares an important principle: the supply lines are just as vital as the soldiers are and God will reward both "soldiers" and "supporters" properly.

i. Many people serve the LORD in invisible, behind-the-scenes ways, often supporting a much more visible aspect of the LORD's work. God will support the hidden servant with the same reward as prominent servant.

ii. The **wicked and worthless men** looked at the spoil and said, "We fought for this spoil and it is ours." David looked at the spoil and said, "Look at **what the LORD has given us.**" When you looked at it that way, how could you not share? When the LORD had given David such a great victory, he really saw it as the LORD's victory more than his own.

d. This principle was so important that it was declared to be **a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day**. The principle should be declared and believed among God's people today.

i. There is encouragement for the **weary** here. "You Little-Faiths, you Despondencies, you Much-Afraid, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness, but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you his love, his grace, his favor, as surely as he gives it to those who can do great things in his name." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>) ii. Poole on why those who stayed back were worthy of a portion of the spoil: "The reason of it is manifest, because they were exposed to hazards as well as their brethren, and were a reserve to whom they might retreat in case of a defeat; and they were now in actual service, and in the station in which their general had placed them."

2. (26-31) David mends strained relationships.

Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent *some* of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD"; to *those* who *were* in Bethel, *those* who *were* in Ramoth of the South, *those* who *were* in Jattir, *those* who *were* in Aroer, *those* who *were* in Siphmoth, *those* who *were* in Eshtemoa, *those* who *were* in Rachal, *those* who *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, *those* who *were* in the cities of the Kenites, *those* who *were* in Hormah, *those* who *were* in Chorashan, *those* who *were* in Athach, *those* who *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove.



a. **When David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends:** David knew that his time among the Philistines had strained his relationships with God's people. Now he knows he must do whatever he can to put things right again, so **he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah.**

i. "David became rich and able to send presents to his friends; but he was also the better man, the holier man, the stronger man, the more fit to wear that crown which was so soon to adorn his brow. Oh, brothers and sisters, the deeper your trouble the louder will be your song, if you can but trust in God and walk in fellowship with

Jesus." (Spurgeon <Spurgeon.htm>)

b. This is the final step in David's getting things right after his time of backsliding among the Philistines.

□

*David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.*

□

*David inquired of the LORD.*

□

David believed God's promise.

□

David did what God told him to do.

□

David showed unexpected care and kindness

to others.



David saw it as the LORD's victory.



David shared the reward with others.



David did what he could to mend relationships.

i. Baldwin says well, "David's genius was his spiritual resilience. He expected to find the resources he needed in the Lord his God, and he was not disappointed."

c. **Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD:** David sent spoil from the battle to more than 13 cities.

Obviously, there was *spoil to spare* from the battle. In this, David is a picture of his greater Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus triumphed on the cross, He won the greatest battle, and He had "spoil to share." He shared the spoil with His people, as it says in Eph. 4:7-8: *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."* Jesus has spoil from His victory to give you!

d. David is a remarkable picture of Jesus in this chapter. Note these five points of association:

- We are like David's men, David is like Jesus.
- We are like the weary ones left behind, David is like Jesus.
- We are like the Egyptian slave, David is like Jesus.

· We are like the spoil David recovered,  
David is like Jesus.



We are like the elders of Judah, and David is like Jesus.

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**2** They took captive the women who were in it, from the youngest to the oldest, but they did not kill anyone. They simply carried them off and went on their way.

**3** When David and his men came to the city, they found it burned. Their wives, sons, and daughters had been taken captive. **4** Then David and the men who were with him wept loudly until they could weep no more. **5** David's two wives had been taken captive – Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the Carmelite, Nabal's widow. **6**

David was very upset, for the men were thinking of stoning him; each man grieved bitterly over his sons and daughters. But David drew strength from the LORD his God.

**7** Then David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. **8** David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Should I pursue this raiding band? Will I overtake them?"

He said to him, "Pursue, for you will certainly overtake them and carry out a rescue!"

**9** So David went, accompanied by his six hundred men.

When he came to the Wadi Besor, those who were in the rear stayed there. **10** David and four hundred men continued the pursuit, but two hundred men who were too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor stayed there.

**11** Then they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David. They gave him bread to eat and water to drink. **12** They gave him a slice of pressed figs and two bunches of raisins to eat. This greatly refreshed him, for he had not eaten food or drunk water for three days and three

nights. **13** David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?" The young man said, "I am an Egyptian, the servant of an Amalekite man. My master abandoned me when I was ill for three days. **14**

We conducted a raid on the Negev of the Kerethites, on the area of Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb. We burned Ziklag." **15** David said to him, "Can you take us down to this raiding party?" He said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to this raiding party."

**16** So he took David down, and they found them spread out over the land. They were eating and drinking and enjoying themselves because of all the loot they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

**17** But David struck them down from twilight until the following evening. None of them escaped, with the exception of four hundred young men who got away on camels. **18** David retrieved everything the Amalekites had taken; he also rescued his two wives. **19** There was nothing missing, whether small or great. He retrieved sons and daughters, the plunder, and everything else they had taken. David brought everything back. **20** David took all the flocks and herds and drove them in front of the rest of the animals. People were saying, "This is David's plunder!"

**21** Then David approached the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to go with him, those whom they had left at the Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David and the people who were with him. When David approached the people, he asked how they were doing. **22**

But all the evil and worthless men among those who had gone with David said, "Since they didn't go with us, we won't give them any of the loot we retrieved! They may take only their wives and children. Let them lead them away and be gone!"

**23** But David said, "No! You shouldn't do this, my brothers. Look at what the LORD has given us! He has protected us

and has delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. **24** Who will listen to you in this matter? The portion of the one who went down into the battle will be the same as the portion of the one who remained with the equipment! Let their portions be the same!”

**25** From that time onward it was a binding ordinance for Israel, right up to the present time.

**26** When David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah who were his friends, saying, “Here’s a gift for you from the looting of the LORD’s enemies!” **27** The gift was for those in the following locations: for those in Bethel, Ramoth Negev, and Jattir; **28** for those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, **29**

and Racal; for those in the cities of the Jerahmeelites and Kenites; **30** for those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach, **31** and Hebron; and for those in whatever other places David and his men had traveled.

**1** Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel. The men of Israel fled from the Philistines and many of them fell dead on Mount Gilboa.

Guzik - 1 Samuel 31:1-13

### ***1 Samuel 31 - The Death of Saul and His Sons***

A. King Saul and his sons die in battle.

1. (1) The battle turns against Israel.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

a. **So the Philistines fought against Israel:** The Philistines had attacked deep into Israeli territory (1Sa. 28:4), and Saul's army assembled and prepared for battle at Mount Gilboa (1Sa.

28:4). Because of his deep rebellion against the LORD, Saul was not ready for battle: *When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly* (1Sa. 28:5).

i. Instead of taking his fears to the LORD,

Saul made things even worse by seeking God's voice through a spirit medium. Strangely, God did speak to Saul, but God spoke words of judgment to Saul through an unusual appearance of the prophet Samuel. Samuel told Saul that he and his sons would die the next day (1Sa. 28:19). 1Sa. 31:1 is the next day.

ii. The **Philistines fought against Israel**, and David wanted to be part of this group of Philistines (1Sa. 29:2, 8). It was the LORD's mercy that did not allow David to take up with these enemies of the LORD.

b. **The men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa:** **Gilboa** was the location of the Israeli army camp (1Sa. 28:4), so the battle has turned so badly for Israel that they are in full retreat, back to their own camp.

2. (2) The death of Saul's sons.

Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

a. **And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons:** Tragically, Saul's sons are affected in the judgment of God against their father Saul.

i. The brave and worthy Jonathan dies as we might expect him to - loyally fighting for his God, his country, and his father the king unto the very end.

b. Their death was tragic, yet important in God's plan. In taking the logical heirs to Saul's throne, God cleared the way for David to become the next king of Israel. We know that if Jonathan had survived, he would have gladly yielded the throne to David (1Sa. 18:1-4). But the same could not be

said of Saul's other sons, so God was merciful to the nation and to David in taking Saul's sons in battle. God was also merciful to Jonathan, sparing him the ordeal of having to side with David against his own brothers.

i. "There was also a special providence of God in taking away Jonathan, (who of all Saul's sons seems to have been the fairest for the crown,) for the preventing divisions, which have happened amongst the people concerning the successor; David's way to the crown being by this means made the more clear." (Poole <biblio.htm>)

ii. As it was, David had to deal with Ishbosheth, the one surviving son of Saul before taking the undisputed throne of Israel (2Sa. 2:8 through 4:12).

3. (3-6) The tragic end of King Saul.

The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.

a. **The battle became intense against Saul:** Saul, struck by many arrows and **severely wounded**, knew the battle was completely lost. He pleads with his armorbearer to kill him, and when he will not, Saul kills himself (**Saul took a sword and fell on it**).

i. "The flower of his army lay strewn around him; the chivalry of Israel was quenched in rivers of blood. Then, leaving all others, the Philistines concentrated their attack on that lordly figure which towered amid the fugitives, the royal crown on the helmet, the royal bracelet flashing on his arm." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

ii. In the way most people think of suicide, Saul's death was not suicide. Clarke explains well: "He was to all appearance mortally wounded, when he begged his armourbearer

to extinguish the remaining spark of life . . .

though this wound accelerated his death, yet

it could not be properly the cause of it, as he was mortally wounded before, and did it on

the conviction that he could not survive."

iii. Yet, how does God feel about suicide? It is sin; it is the sin of self-murder. Yet, we are wrong if we regard it as the unforgivable sin, and anyone who does commit suicide has given in to the lies and deceptions of Satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy (Joh. 10:10).

iv. "Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice. In the case of Saul, and in many similar cases, it is perfectly natural; but let it never be glorified as heroic. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life." (Morgan)

b. As sad as anything is in this account, sad is the *absence* of any kind of sorrow or repentance or crying out to God at all on Saul's part. He was told the previous day that he would die (1Sa. 28:19), yet he does not seem to have prepared his soul to meet God in any way.

i. The events of this chapter happened some 20 years after Saul first heard the announcement of judgment against him



from the prophet Samuel. Perhaps Saul thought that time was on his side, because God's announced judgment did not happen immediately. But time was against him, because in the 20 years since, his heart became more hard against God.

ii. At the end of his life, Saul had become so hardened in sin that he *did not want* to repent. Many people put off getting right with God until a later time, assuming they will still want to get right with God then. But that is a dangerous, dangerous assumption, because repentance is a gift from God, and if it is here today it should be received today.

iii. "It is a very solemn thought! No career could begin with fairer, brighter prospects than Saul had, and none could close in more absolute midnight of despair; and yet such a fate may befall us, unless we watch, and pray, and walk humbly with our God." (Meyer <Meyer.htm>)

c. In 2Sa. 1:4-10, an Amalekite came to David with the report that Saul had died in battle, and that he had actually delivered the death-blow to Saul. Does the Amalekite's statement contradict this passage, where it seems Saul killed himself?

It may be that Saul fell on his sword, and life still lingered in him, so he asked this Amalekite to finish him off. Or it may be that the Amalekite simply lied, and was the first one to come upon Saul's dead body, and that he told David that he killed him because he thought David would be pleased and he would be rewarded.

B. Aftermath of the Philistine's victorious battle.

1. (7) A significant defeat for Israel.

And when the men of Israel who *were* on the other side of the valley, and *those* who *were* on the other side of the

Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

a. **They forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them:** The victory of the Philistines was so complete that even those **on the other side of the Jordan** fled in terror before the Philistines. With the Philistine army occupying territory **on the other side of the Jordan**, they have cut Israel in half, drawing a line from west to east. The rest of the nation is ripe for total conquest by the Philistines.

i. As the Philistines routed the land, Jonathan had a five-year-old son named Mephibosheth who was injured and left lame as he fled (2Sa. 4:4). King David's later kindness to Mephibosheth is one of the more touching stories of David's life (2Sa. 9:1-13).

b. This great defeat came when God's people **saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead**. When the leader (King Saul) was struck, it spread panic among God's people. Jesus knew this same principle would be used against His own

disciples: *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" (Mar. 14:27)*

i. In Jesus' case, He knew that after the glory of His triumph on the cross and over death at the empty tomb, the disciples would once again be gathered unto Him. But this isn't always the case today when a leader of God's work falls. Ideally, people would look to the LORD instead of stumbling themselves over a leader's fall, but this doesn't always happen.

c. Saul's sin, hardened rebellion, and eventual ruin affected far more than himself and even his immediate family. It literally endangered the entire nation of Israel.

i. This shows why leaders have a higher responsibility, because their fall can endanger many more people than the fall of someone who is not a leader. This is why the New Testament openly preaches a higher standard for leaders, even saying they should be *blameless* for just cause before the world and God's people (1Ti. 3:2, Tit. 1:6).

2. (8-10) The Philistines disgrace the corpses of King Saul and his sons.

So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent *word* throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim *it in* the temple of their idols and among the people. Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.

a. Saul's tragic death gave opportunity for the enemies of the LORD to disgrace His name.

First, they gave the ultimate insult to Saul; in that culture, to have your dead body treated

this way was considered a fate worse than

death itself. Second, Saul's death was used to glorify pagan gods and to mock the living God (**to proclaim it in the temple of their idols and among the people**).

b. **They fastened his body to the wall of**

**Beth Shan:** You can go to the ruins of Beth Shan today, as the foundations to the city sit high on a hill overlooking the Roman ruins destroyed in an earthquake. It was high on that hill that the Philistines hung the decapitated corpse of King Saul in the ultimate humiliation.

3. (11-13) The valiant men of Jabesh Gilead end the disgrace of Saul and his sons.

Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. Then they took their bones and buried *them* under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

a. **All the valiant men arose:** In a time of disgrace, loss, and tragedy like this, God still has His **valiant men** to do His work. The men of Jabesh Gilead took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from their place of humiliation and gave them a proper burial.

i. Glory to God, He always has His **valiant men**! When one servant passes the scene, another arises to take his place. If Saul is gone, God raises up a David. If the army of Israel is utterly routed, God still has His **valiant men**. God's work is bigger than any man, or any group of people.

b. **The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead** are also recognized for their *gratitude*. Many years before, Saul delivered their city from the Ammonites (1Sa. 11:1-11), and they repay the kindness God showed them from the hand of Saul. Upon taking the throne, David rightly thanked these **valiant men** for their kindness to the memory of Saul, Jonathan, and Saul's other sons (2Sa. 2:4-7).

c. When David heard of Saul's death, he did not rejoice. In fact, he mourned and composed a song in honor of Saul and Jonathan ( *The Song of the Bow*, 2Sa. 1:11-27). In spite of all that Saul did against David, David spoke well of Saul after his death.

i. David called Saul *the beauty of Israel* (2Sa. 1:19).

ii. David wanted no one to rejoice in Saul's death (2Sa. 1:20).

iii. David wanted everyone to mourn, even the mountains and fields (2Sa. 1:21).

iv. David praised Saul as a mighty warrior (2Sa. 1:22-23).

v. David complimented the personality and loyalty of Saul (2Sa. 1:23).

vi. David called Israel to mourning, and called on others to praise Saul for the good he did for Israel (2Sa. 1:24).

d. How did David keep his heart free from bitterness, and keep himself in a place where he could speak so wonderfully about a man who had hurt him so much?

i. *David chose to trust in the power and authority of God.* He chose to believe that God was in control and must have a purpose even for terrible things that He allows to happen. Many, many times we can only see the good in retrospect. If you can't see the good in something terrible that has happened to you, you must simply trust that it is there, and it will be revealed in time.

ii. *David chose to "let it go."* He chose not to hold on to bitterness and hurt. David had two great opportunities to kill Saul, and "let him go" each time. David's "Song of the Bow" in 2 Samuel 1 shows that this attitude was in his *heart*, not only in his *actions*.

David could have murdered Saul in his heart a thousand times over, but never doing it in his actions. His heart in the Song of the Bow shows that he didn't even murder Saul in his heart; he "let him go" there also. To do this, David must have *kept a short account* of the wrongs Saul did to him.

iii. *David chose to think the best about Saul.*

He couldn't have spontaneously said the things he said about Saul in the Song of the

Bow unless they had been in his heart and mind before that. One of the characteristics of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is *Love thinks no evil*.

iv. *David chose to remember that God had forgiven him.* David heard the news of Saul's death and sang the "Song of the Bow" when he was in Ziklag (2Sa. 1:1). The city was still filled with burned rubble that was the indirect result of David's backsliding and sin.

David had just come from a time when the LORD had graciously forgiven him - how could he not show a gracious heart towards Saul's memory.

v. *David chose to keep doing these things.*

Many people can set their heart right for a moment, but it is quickly lost. Whenever that happened to David, he put his heart back in the right place quickly.

e. Choosing this kind of heart showed David to be a true "Man after God's Own Heart." It showed that the years in the wilderness, escaping Saul, really were years when God trained him to be a king, and a king after God's own heart. David would never follow in the same tragic footsteps as King Saul.

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**2** The Philistines stayed right on the heels of Saul and his sons. They struck down Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua. **3** Saul himself was in the thick of the battle; the archers spotted him and wounded him severely.

**4** Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and stab me with it! Otherwise these uncircumcised people will come, stab me, and torture me." But his armor bearer refused to do it, because he was very afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. **5** When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his own sword and died with him. **6** So Saul,

his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men died together that day.

**7** When the men of Israel who were in the valley and across the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled. The Philistines came and occupied them.

**8** The next day, when the Philistines came to strip loot from the corpses, they discovered Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. **9** They cut off Saul's head and stripped him of his armor. They sent messengers to announce the news in the temple of their idols and among their people throughout the surrounding land of the Philistines. **10** They placed Saul's armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and hung his corpse on the city wall of Beth Shan.

**11** When the residents of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, **12** all their warriors set out and traveled throughout the night. They took Saul's corpse and the corpses of his sons from the city wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. **13** They took the bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh; then they fasted for seven days.